

# UNREAL PAST

The unreal past refers to the use of:

- The **past simple** or **continuous** to talk about situations that are not real in the present or in the future.
- the **past perfect simple** or **continuous** to talk about a hypothetical past that never actually happened

Some constructions that need the unreal past:

- 2nd and 3rd conditional
- Supposing / Imagine / What if
- I wish / if only
- would rather / would sooner \* - to show preference
- It's (about / high) time\*\* - to say that something has to be done now or in the near future
- As if / As though - for hypothetical comparisons about the present or future

In the case of the verb **TO BE**, we use **were** for all subject pronouns. Ex: I wish I ~~was~~ **were** taller.

\*We use the unreal past when there is a change of subject. Ex: He'd rather I helped him. When there is no change of subject, we use the infinitive **without to**. Ex: I'd rather eat in tonight.

\*\* We use the infinitive with to when there is no urgency. Ex: Come on! It's time (for you) to start the lesson.

Complete the sentences with the correct unreal past.

1. If only I \_\_\_\_\_ (study) harder at school, I'd have a better job now.
2. My brother looked as if he \_\_\_\_\_ (not sleep) for weeks.
3. He said he'd tidy up my bedroom as long as I \_\_\_\_\_ (not tell) mum and dad where he had been the night before.
4. It's about time I \_\_\_\_\_ (move) out of my parents' house.
5. She would rather he \_\_\_\_\_ (not call) her any more.
6. She spends money as if she \_\_\_\_\_ (make) double what she makes.
7. He'd rather we \_\_\_\_\_ (stay) with him than in a hotel when we were in France.
8. It's high time we \_\_\_\_\_ (do) something about climate change.
9. We would have never made it if it \_\_\_\_\_ (not be) for your help.
10. It's too late now, but I'd rather you \_\_\_\_\_ (speak) to me first.
11. I'd rather \_\_\_\_\_ (not take) the exam. I feel I'm not prepared enough.
12. Suppose you \_\_\_\_\_ (win) the final match, how would you celebrate?
13. I wish I \_\_\_\_\_ (not argue) with her, now she won't talk to me again.
14. She looks so upset. She looks as though she \_\_\_\_\_ (cry).
15. What if you \_\_\_\_\_ (not go) to university? You wouldn't be working here now.

For Questions 1-12, complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between 2 and 5 words.

1. I'd love to know how John is getting on.

**KNEW**

I \_\_\_\_\_ how John was getting on.

2. I got all wet because I didn't take an umbrella with me.

**HAVE**

If I hadn't forgotten my umbrella, I \_\_\_\_\_ all wet.

3. I think taxes should be increased.

**TIME**

It \_\_\_\_\_ increased.

4. He behaves like the President of the company.

**THOUGH**

He acts \_\_\_\_\_ the President of the company.

5. I regret not inviting Cathy to the party.

**ONLY**

If \_\_\_\_\_ Cathy to the party.

6. I'd prefer you to get home early tonight.

**RATHER**

I \_\_\_\_\_ home early tonight.

7. It's a pity the car is so expensive.

**WISH**

I \_\_\_\_\_ so expensive.

8. It will be better for you to come alone.

**SOONER**

I would \_\_\_\_\_ on your own.

9. I'm sorry my office doesn't get any sun.

**WOULD**

I \_\_\_\_\_ some sun.

10. You should really have your hair cut.

**HIGH**

It's \_\_\_\_\_ your hair cut.

11. She'd like to rent a car but I'm keener on using public transport.

**USE**

She'd like to rent a car but \_\_\_\_\_ public transport.

12. Do you want me to help you now or later?

**RATHER**

\_\_\_\_\_ you now or later?