

I wish / if only

There are three distinct types of *I wish / if only* sentences (**If only can be more emphatic than I wish*):

- 1) Wish, wanting change for the present or future with the simple past.
- 2) Regret with the past perfect.
- 3) Complains with *would* + verb.

- 1) Expressing a wish:

Use: To express a wish in the present or in the future. The simple past here is an unreal past.

Form: **If only / I wish + simple past**

e.g., If only I *knew* how to use a computer. (I don't know how to use a computer and I would like to learn how to use it)
-When you use the verb to be the form is "were". e.g., I wish I *were* a millionaire!

- 2) Expressing a regret: **Use:** To express a regret. The action is past.

Form: **If only / I wish + past perfect**

e.g., If only I *had woken up* early. (I didn't wake up early and I missed my bus.)

- 3) Complaining: **Use:** To complain about a behavior that you disapprove. Expressing impatience, annoyance or dissatisfaction with a present action.

Form: **If only / I wish + would + verb**

e.g., I wish you *wouldn't arrive* so late all the time.

(I'm annoyed because you always come late and I want you to arrive on time)

Wishes about the present

We use wish with past Tense forms (simple and continuous) to express regret about present situations:

- I wish I *was* taller = (I'm not very tall)

- I wish I *was going* with you = (but I'm not)

I wish you *were* more help. = (you are not) *I wish I were* can replace *I wish I was*.

To many people, *I wish I were* sounds more correct: I wish *I were* taller.

We use wish with *could* to express a wish for a present situation to be different:

I wish I *could* use a computer well. (~~X I wish I would tell her about it.~~) I wish I *could* tell her about it.

Task: Write the sentences:

1. I don't know the answer. → *If only / I wish* _____
2. I'm not good at sports. → *If only / I wish* _____
3. I'm not going with you. → *If only / I wish* _____
4. I can't give you an answer. → *If only / I wish* _____
5. Your talking irritates me. → *If only / I wish* _____ (be quiet)
6. I didn't know you then. → *If only / I wish* _____
7. I wasn't able to explain that rule. → *If only / I wish* _____
8. You are constantly talking. → *If only / I wish* _____ (stop)
9. They are arguing! → *If only / I wish* _____ (stop)
10. The car is going too slow. → *If only / I wish* _____ (faster)
11. I took your advice. Now I regret it. → *If only / I wish* _____
12. She wasn't able to come. → *If only / I wish* _____
13. I haven't got much money! → *If only / I wish* _____ (more)
14. Unfortunately, I'm not going on holiday with you! → *If only / I wish* _____
15. You aren't here! What a shame! → *If only / I wish* _____
16. There is no sun! It's so gloomy. → *If only / I wish* the sun _____ (come out)!
17. I didn't listen to you. I regret it now. → *If only / I wish* the sun _____