

Expressing Wishes & Regrets

WISH / IF ONLY

We use **'WISH' + past simple** to express that we want a situation in the present (or future) to be different (though unlikely).

Examples: I wish/If only I spoke Italian. (I don't speak Italian.)

Future: I wish it was/were the weekend tomorrow. (It's only Thursday tomorrow.)

We use **'WISH' + past continuous** to express that we want to be doing a different action in the present (or future).

Examples: I wish/If only I was lying on a beach now. (I'm sitting in the office.)

Future: I wish you weren't leaving tomorrow. (You are leaving tomorrow.)

We use **'WISH' + past perfect** to express a regret, or that we want a situation in the past to be different (impossible now).

Examples: I wish I hadn't eaten so much. (I ate a lot.)

I wish/If only I had studied harder at school. (I was lazy at school.)

We use **'WISH' + WOULD + BARE INFINITIVE** to express impatience, annoyance or dissatisfaction with a present action.

Examples: I wish you would stop smoking. (You are smoking at the moment and it is annoying me.) I wish it would stop raining. (I'm impatient because it is raining and I want to go outside.) I wish she'd be quiet. (I am annoyed because she is speaking.)

WOULD RATHER HAD BETTER

Would rather is used as an alternative to **would prefer to** followed by an infinitive. **Would rather** is very common in spoken English and is often abbreviated to **'d rather**. It is used in this form with all personal pronouns: **I'd / you'd / he'd / she'd / we'd / they'd rather...**

Examples:

Would you like to go out for dinner tonight?

~ No, I think I'd rather eat at home / I'd prefer to eat at home.

Would you rather drink beer or wine with the curry ?

~ I'd rather drink beer.

Had better is similar structurally to **'d rather**, and it is used to suggest necessary action or threat. In this case however, **'d** is the abbreviated form of **had**, not **would**. Like **'d rather**, **'d better** is followed by the bare infinitive without **to**.

Examples:

We'd better not be late for the Ambassador's party.

You'd better phone him and tell him that you're not going.

They'd better buy me a Christmas present or I shall never forgive them

SHOULD'VE COULD'VE

Should combines with the perfect infinitive to form **should have** + past participle when we want to talk about **past events that did not happen**, but **should have happened**.

We are talking about an expectation and referring back to past time.

Examples:

*What did I tell you? **You should have taken your umbrella**. Then you **wouldn't have got wet**.*

As with **would have**, and **should have**, **could have** is used to talk about the past and refers to things that people could have done in the past, but didn't attempt to do or succeed in doing:

Examples:

***I could have gone** to university, if I'd **passed my exams**.*

*If he'd **trained harder**, I'm sure **he could have completed** the swim.*