

Wishes and related forms

Adapted from "First Certificate Language Practice" by Michael Vince

Explanations

Wishes

- **Wishes about the present**

For wishes about the present we use / *wish* + the past simple. The time referred to is an imaginary present.

*I wish I **knew** the answer to this question.* (I do not know the answer.)
*I wish I **didn't have** so much work to do.*
(I do have a lot of work).

- **Wishes about the past**

For wishes about the past we use / *wish* + the past perfect. The time referred to is past time.

*I wish I **had gone** to your party last week.* (I did not go.)

- **Wishes about the future**

We can use *could* to refer to a future event.

*I wish June **could meet** me next week.*

We also use *could* to refer to something that is generally difficult or impossible.

*I wish I **could drive**.*

*I wish I **could contact** him, but I don't have my mobile phone with me.*

We can also use *have to* to refer to a future event.

*I wish I **didn't have to get up** early tomorrow.*

- **Wishes using *would***

When we want to complain about a bad habit we use *I wish* + *would*.

*I wish Peter **wouldn't chew** gum all the time.*

We also use *I wish* + *would* to refer to something that we would like to happen.

*I wish the police **would do** something about these people!*

If only

We can replace / *wish* with *If only* for emphasis.

***If only** I **knew** the answer to this question!*

***If only** I **had gone** to your party last week!*

In speech, *only* is often heavily stressed.

It's time

The construction *it's time I/you/we ...* is followed by a past tense.

*Sorry, but **it's time** we **went** home.*

The meaning here is similar to a second conditional.

***If we went** home, it **would be better**.* *High* can be added for extra emphasis.

***It's high time** you **learned** to look after yourself!*

- *It's time* can also be used with the infinitive. The meaning changes slightly.

It's time you started work! (you are being lazy and not working)

It's time to start work. (a simple statement of fact.)

I'd rather

The construction *I'd rather I/you/we ...* is followed by a past tense.

I'd rather you didn't tell John about this.

The meaning here is similar to a second conditional.

If you didn't tell John about this, it would be better.

Suppose and imagine

In informal speech we can use *suppose* or *imagine* in place of *if*. The construction is a normal second conditional.

Suppose you lost your keys. What would you do? Imagine you were rich. How would you feel?

- Key points**
- 1 Wishes about the present use a past tense form, and wishes about the past perfect form.
 - 2 Wishes with *would* refer either to annoying habits or to something like to happen.
 - 3 Past tense forms are used after *It's time* and *I'd rather* to show an situation.

It's time we left.

4 *I hope ...* can be used in a similar way to *I wish ...* But *I hope* is used only for wishes that are actually possible, and it usually has a good meaning.

I hope you have a good time.

There's a lot to see. I hope you won't be late. *Wish* cannot be used in this way.

I hope ... can be used with the infinitive.

I hope to see you next week.

But *I wish* with the infinitive has a different meaning. It is a formal way of saying *I'd like to* (or *I want to*).

I wish to interview you for the job next week.

Note also these expressions:

I wish you luck/success in your new job. We wish you a happy New Year.

