

wish and if only

English Grammar · B2

wish + past simple (Regret about the present)

wish / if only

wish + past	wish + past perfect	wish + would
present regret	past regret	behaviour
<i>I wish I had a car</i>	<i>I wish I had studied</i>	<i>I wish you would listen</i>

wish / if only: reference card grid

wish expresses a **desire** or **regret**. For dissatisfaction with the **present**, use **past simple** (subjunctive) after wish.

Structure: wish +

I wish I had more time.

I wish I had more time. (But I don't)

She wishes she lived by the sea.

She wishes she lived by the sea. (But she doesn't)

Note: Like the second conditional, the verb **be** is commonly **were**: *I wish I were taller.*

wish + past perfect / would

Two advanced usages:

- Regret about the **past**: **wish** + (should have... but didn't).
- Dissatisfaction with **others' behavior** / desire for change: **wish** + + **would**.

I wish I had studied harder.

I wish I had studied harder. (Regret about the past)

I wish you would listen.

I wish you could listen. (Dissatisfaction with others' behavior)

Note: **if only** functions like wish but with stronger emphasis: *If only I had known!*

Common Errors

- × ~I wish I have more time.~ → ✓ I wish I **had** more time. — Tense must “step back” after wish.
- × ~I wish I studied harder last year.~ → ✓ I wish I **had studied** harder last year. — Regrets about the past require past perfect.
- × ~I wish I would be taller.~ → ✓ I wish I **were** taller. — wish + would applies only to dissatisfaction with **others' behavior**, never oneself.
- × ~I wish you will pass the exam.~ → ✓ I **hope** you pass the exam. — Wishes for real possibilities use hope; wish + clause expresses “unreality” (except fixed phrases like *I wish you good luck*).