

16 Clauses with 'wish' ✨

Three different tenses can be used after the verb *wish* depending on the circumstances:

1. When we wish that something not yet happening would happen, or that something happening now would change or stop, we use the Conditional tense:

I wish you *would agree* to come.

We wish you *would tell* us the truth.

He wishes it *would stop* raining.

I wish that you *would speak* more slowly.

(Note that the Future tense cannot be used here.)

2. When we wish that a situation which does not exist did exist, or that a situation which does exist did not exist, we use the Past Simple tense:

I wish I *knew* the answer. (i.e. I don't know the answer.)

We wish we *could* help you. (i.e. We can't.)

We wish the rains *weren't* so heavy. (i.e. They are heavy.)

He wishes the terms *weren't* so long. (i.e. They are long.)

Strictly speaking, the verb here is in the Subjunctive form, but this is exactly the same as the Past Simple and does not have to be learnt separately. Note, however, that *were* is normally used instead of *was* with singular words in this construction.

She wishes she *were* married.

I wish I *were* taller.

He wishes his father *were* not so poor.

3. When we wish that something had happened which did not happen, or that something had not happened which did happen, we use the Past Perfect tense:

I wish I *had listened* to you. (i.e. I didn't.)

He wishes he *had worked* hard. (i.e. He didn't.)

I wish I *hadn't told* you. (i.e. I did.)

We wish we *hadn't come*. (i.e. We did.)

EXERCISE 55

Change the infinitives in brackets to the most suitable tense (Conditional, Past Simple or Past Perfect). It will help if you first decide which of the three groups described above, the sentence belongs to.

- 1 We wish you (not disturb) us yesterday evening.
- 2 I wish that the examination (be) further away. It starts next Thursday morning.
- 3 I wish it (rain) tomorrow.
- 4 Our teacher wishes he (choose) another profession.
- 5 I wish we (not have) breakfast so early this morning. I'm hungry already.
- 6 I wish you (stop) your dog barking. I can't listen to my radio.
- 7 I wish you (stop) your dog barking last night. I couldn't listen to my radio.
- 8 He wishes he (be) older than he is.
- 9 I wish he (stop) singing. I can't bear it any longer.
- 10 He wishes his grandfather (be) alive now.
- 11 He wishes his grandfather (be) alive when he won the prize: he would have been very proud of him.
- 12 I wish we (start) our holidays yesterday.
- 13 I wish I not (be) so lazy when I was in the elementary school.
- 14 He wishes his father (buy) him some shoes before the new term started.
- 15 He wishes his father (buy) him some shoes before the new term starts.
- 16 I wish he (go). He's been here over an hour now.
- 17 I wish he (give) me a lift in his car when he goes to town.
- 18 I wish the teacher (tell) us more about the examination before it took place.
- 19 She wishes he (decide) if he wants to marry her.
- 20 We wish we (plant) those seeds earlier last year.
- 21 I wish this school (have) a bigger library than it has.
- 22 That farmer wishes he (not sell) all his cattle. He didn't get very much for them.
- 23 I wish you (repeat) what you have just told me so that I don't forget.
- 24 I wish it (be) dry today so that we could play tennis.
- 25 I wish our teacher (be) more generous when he marked the examination we took last week.
- 26 I wish we (not arrive) late for this film. I can't follow the story.

- 27 I wish it (be) time to go home. I'm feeling very tired.
- 28 My father wishes I (choose) English as my main subject at the university, but I don't think I will.
- 29 I wish he (not tell) me how badly I had done. I feel very depressed now.
- 30 I wish I (have) more books than I have. *