

Prepare for {IELTS}

Video Lessons





GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Wishes and regrets

WISHES

EXPLANATION

- Being able to express **WISHES** is important for the IELTS Speaking Test and can be useful in IELTS Writing, especially in the **CONCLUSION** to a Task 2 question.
- When we want to describe something which annoys us and something which we hope will change in the present or future, we can use **wish + subject + would**.

EXPRESSING **WISHES** AND REGRETS

We can use **wish + subject + would** for annoying things which we hope will change:

- I **wish** **politicians** **would tell** the truth.
- I **wish** that **some of the bigoted individuals living in this country** **would realise** that immigrants make a positive contribution to our society. (We can use **that** after **wish** in longer, complex sentences)
- I **wish** that **adults who complain about children** **would stop** criticising and **begin** to understand the challenges which youngsters face.
- I **wish** **it** **would stop** raining.
- Many environmentalists **wish** that **householders** **wouldn't buy** so many products packed in plastic.

EXPRESSING **WISHES** AND REGRETS

We can use **wish + subject + would** for annoying things which we hope will change:

- I **wish governments would spend** more time listening to the concerns of ordinary people.
- Many of us **wish** that **those in power would do** something to tackle global inequality.
- I **wish you would stop** arguing with each other.
- I really **wish you wouldn't** always **interrupt** me.
- **It is my fervent wish** that **all of those in power would focus** on alleviating poverty and inequality.

EXPLANATION

- We can also sometimes use **wish + subject + would** to express regret about the present situation and a wish that it would change.
- However, we can only use this structure to refer to things which the subject can control and can change if he/she wants to. So, we are really writing about the subject's willingness or unwillingness to do something.

EXPRESSING **WISHES** AND REGRETS

We can use **wish + subject + would** for wishes about willingness:

- I **wish you would stop** humming and tapping your fingers.
- I **wish you would keep** your thoughts to yourself.
- I **wish you wouldn't throw** all your dirty clothes on the floor and expect me to pick them up and wash them.
- I **wish you wouldn't** deliberately **provoke** your sister.
- I **wish he would act** a bit more responsibly.
- I **wish the teacher would explain** things in a bit more detail.
- Medical experts **wish** that **members of the public would take** fewer antibiotics.

EXPLANATION

- We can use **wish + subject + simple past tense / subjunctive** to describe things which we would like to be different now or generally. We usually use this structure to describe things which are impossible or unlikely.
- In more formal communication, we can use **were** instead of **was** after the verb **to wish**.

EXPRESSING **WISHES** AND REGRETS

We can use **wish + subject + simple past / subjunctive** for things we would like to be different now or generally:

- I **wish** **the world** **was/were** fairer.
- I **wish** **I** **had** more money.
- I **wish** **public transport** **was/were** more reliable.
- I **wish** **I** **could fly**.
- I **wish** **I** **knew** what he wanted.
- I **wish** **I** **found** it easier to talk to girls.
- I **wish** **the world** **was/were** a more peaceful place, where we could all live together in harmony.

EXPRESSING **WISHES** AND REGRETS

We can use **wish + subject + simple past / subjunctive** for things we would like to be different now or generally:

- I **wish** **the other people living in my house** **were** a bit more considerate.
- I **wish** **I** **had** more time to spend with my friends.
- Most of us **wish** **we** **were** richer.
- Many of us **wish** that **we** **could make** a more positive contribution, and help the world to become a better place.
- I **wish** **politicians** **didn't tell** so many lies and **didn't treat** voters as if they were children.
- Lots of pupils **wish** **they** **didn't have to go** to school.

EXPLANATION

- It is possible to follow **to wish** with an infinitive such as **to complain**. In this case, **wish** means **want** or **would like**. It is quite a formal structure, which makes it useful for General Writing Task 1 (formal letters).
- This structure can only be used when the subject of **to wish** and the subject of the **infinitive** are the same. So, **I wish to explain** means that **I wish** and **I explain**.
- However, we can put an object before the infinitive (**to wish somebody to do something**), though this is very formal.
- We can often replace **wish** with **want** to make this structure less formal.

EXPRESSING **WISHES** AND REGRETS

We can use to wish + (object) + infinitive:

- I **wish to complain** about aspects of my recent stay in your hotel.
- I **wish to inform** you that unless we receive compensation, we will consider a range of measures including legal action.
- I **wish to resign** from my current position with immediate effect.
- I **wish to be considered** for the position advertised on your website.
(This is a passive form)
- I **do not wish to attend** the conference on 28th May.
- My company **does not wish/want me to attend** the training course.
- Although they **wished/wanted to remain**, they were deported. (This structure can be used with other tenses)



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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Wishes and regrets

REGRETS

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EXPLANATION

- We can use **to wish + subject + past perfect** (The PAST PERFECT is made with **had** and a PAST PARTICIPLE such as **gone** or **eaten**).
- We use this form to express a regret about a past situation.

EXPRESSING WISHES AND REGRETS

We can use **to wish + subject + past perfect** for regrets about a past situation:

- I **wish the government had taken** steps to ban smoking as soon as it became clear how dangerous cigarettes were.
- I **wish my country had not hosted** The Olympic Games a few years ago. The benefits have been negligible and the costs extremely high.
- I **wish I had worked** harder at school. I might have got better qualifications and had a successful career.
- Many experts **wish that the government had put** more money into healthcare and education in the past. If this had happened, we would now be reaping the rewards.

EXPLANATION

- We can use the verb **to regret** to indicate sadness about something which happened in the past. The verb **to regret** can be followed by a GERUND (the **-ing** form of a verb) or by **having + past participle** (such as **having eaten** or **having gone**).
- It is generally better to use **to regret** with a GERUND. We can use **to regret** with **having + past participle** when the thing we regret happened a long time ago.

EXPRESSING WISHES AND REGRETS

We can use **to regret + gerund** or **to regret + having + past participle**:

- People from the countryside often **regret moving** to the city.
- Undergraduates studying science sometimes **regret choosing** such a difficult course. They may wish they had opted for something slightly easier and less time-consuming.
- I certainly **don't regret emigrating**. Living abroad has been an immensely enriching experience.
- Some students **regret not trying** harder at school.
- My brother **regrets having turned down** the chance to train as a fighter-pilot when he left school.
- I **regret not having had** the opportunity to travel when I was younger.

EXPLANATION

- We can use **CONDITIONAL FORMS** to express regret.
- The if-clause uses a **PAST PERFECT** form and the result clause uses **would + present perfect** (if the result was in the past) or **would + infinitive** (if the result is in the present).

EXPRESSING WISHES AND REGRETS

We can use conditional forms to express regrets:

- If I **had worked** harder at school, I **would/might have** a decent job now. (The result is in the present)
- If I **had worked** harder at school, I **would/might have managed to get** decent qualifications and **might have become** successful. (The result is in the past)
- If the government **had invested** more in infrastructure, unemployment levels today **would/might be** far lower. (The result is in the present)
- If the government **had invested** more in infrastructure, the economy **would have thrived** in the last twenty years. (The result is in the past)

EXPLANATION

- We can use a similar structure with **if only** to show that we are extremely unhappy about what happened in the past. **If only** adds emphasis and makes our regret stronger.
- This structure can be used with or without a result clause in informal communication, and with a result clause in formal communication.
- When a result clause is used, it can explain past results or present results.

EXPRESSING WISHES AND REGRETS

We can use conditional forms with **if only** to express regrets:

- **If only** I **had listened** to my mum's advice! (This does not have a result clause)
- **If only** I **had prepared** properly for this exam! (This does not have a result clause)
- **If only** I **had stayed** in my previous job, I **would be** a manager by now. (This has a result clause which explains a present result which is not true)
- **If only** I **had led** a healthier lifestyle in my twenties and thirties, I probably **wouldn't have had** that heart-attack last year. (This has a result clause which explains a past result which did not happen)

EXPRESSING WISHES AND REGRETS

We can use conditional forms with **if only** to express regrets:

- **If only** scientists **had realised** how dangerous it was to build a nuclear power-station in the area, they **would/might** never **have agreed** to construct it. (This has a result clause which explains a possible past result which did not happen. We can use **might** instead of **would** to indicate possibility instead of certainty)
- **If only** we **had known** about the effects of climate change fifty years ago, we **might have acted** differently. (This has a result clause which explains a possible past result which did not happen).

EXPRESSING WISHES AND REGRETS

We can use conditional forms with **if only** to express regrets:

- **If only** we **had managed** to develop antibiotics a decade earlier, we **could have saved** thousands of people who died during the war. (This has a result clause which explains a possible past result which did not happen. It uses **could** instead of **would** to indicate possibility or ability instead of certainty)
- **If only** I **had taken** notice of the weather forecast, I **might have realised** how horrible the weather was going to be. I could have cancelled the picnic! (This has a result clause which explains a possible past result which did not happen. It uses **might** instead of **would** to indicate possibility instead of certainty)

EXPRESSING WISHES AND REGRETS

We can use conditional forms with **if only** to express regrets:

- **If only** I **had listened** to your advice, I **would** still **have** a wonderful job
(The result clause describes a current/present result which is not true because an action in the past did not happen. The writer/speaker is sorry that this past action did not happen)
- **If only** I **had taken** my doctor's advice and **cut down** on fatty foods, I **might not be** so overweight and unhealthy now. (The result clause describes a current/present possibility which is not true because an action in the past did not happen. The writer/speaker is sorry that this past action did not happen)



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PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

The following sentences refer to things which annoy us and things which we hope will change in the future. Try to complete them with a form of the verb in brackets. Some of the wishes are positive and some are negative:

EXAMPLE

I wish politicians _____ the truth (**tell**)

ANSWER: I wish politicians **would tell** the truth.

1. I wish rich people _____ more money to charity. (**donate**)
2. I wish the weather _____ (**improve**)
3. I wish older people _____ to the fact that the planet is facing an ecological emergency (**wake up**)
4. I wish drivers _____ to leave their cars at home whenever possible (**try**)
5. I wish politicians _____ so often. (**lie**)

ANSWERS

1. I wish rich people **would donate** more money to charity.
2. I wish the weather **would improve**.
3. I wish older people **would wake up** to the fact that the planet is facing an ecological emergency.
4. I wish drivers **would try** to leave their cars at home whenever possible.
5. I wish politicians **wouldn't lie** so often.

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

The following sentences express regret about the current situation and a wish that somebody would make a change. Decide whether the missing word is **would** or **wouldn't**:

EXAMPLE

I wish you _____ make so much noise when you come home late at night.

ANSWER; I wish you **wouldn't** make so much noise when you come home late at night.

1. I wish you _____ wash your dishes instead of just leaving them on the table.
2. I wish you _____ listen to such loud music all the time.
3. I wish you _____ try a bit harder to do well at school.
4. I wish you _____ listen sometimes, rather than just talking all of the time.
5. I wish you _____ stop humming and tapping your fingers on the table.

ANSWERS

1. I wish you **would** wash your dishes instead of just leaving them on the table.
2. I wish you **wouldn't** listen to such loud music all the time.
3. I wish you **would** try a bit harder to do well at school.
4. I wish you **would** listen sometimes, rather than just talking all of the time.
5. I wish you **would** stop humming and tapping your fingers on the table.

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Re-write the following sentences. Each sentence is about a situation which we would like to be different, but which we do not think will change:

EXAMPLE

I am sorry that the world is unfair.

I _____ fairer.

ANSWER: I wish the world was/were fairer.

1. I'm sorry that I am poor.

I _____ richer.

2. I'm sorry that there are so many wars.

I _____ a more peaceful place.

3. Many of us are sorry that we cannot do more.

Many of us _____ make a bigger contribution

4. I'm sorry I find it so difficult to do maths.

I _____ easier to do maths.

5. I'm sorry that I have so little time to spend with my friends.

I _____ more time to spend with my friends.

ANSWERS

1. I wish I was/were richer

2. I wish the world was/were a more peaceful place

3. Many of us wish we could make a bigger contribution

4. I wish I found it easier to do maths

5. I wish I had more time to spend with my friends

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Use the verb in brackets to complete the following sentences. Each sentence is about a past regret:

EXAMPLE

I wish I _____ harder at school. (**work**)

ANSWER; I wish I **had worked** harder at school.

1. I hate this town. I wish we _____ here (**move**)
2. I wish the government _____ more money in housing, hospitals and education in the past. (**invest**)
3. I wish I _____ to come. It's a terrible place. (**agree**)
1. I regret _____ school at sixteen. I wish I had stayed and got some decent qualifications. (**leave**)
4. I don't regret _____ the whole cake. It was amazing! (**eat**)

ANSWERS

2. I hate this town. I wish we **hadn't moved** here.
3. I wish the government **had invested** more money in housing, hospitals and education in the past.
4. I wish I **hadn't agreed** to come. It's a terrible place.
5. I regret **leaving/having left** school at sixteen. I wish I had stayed and got some decent qualifications.
6. I don't regret **eating/having eaten** the whole cake. It was amazing!

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Look at the following sentences. They express regrets about the past. Try to complete the missing words:

1. If **o** _____ I had **ta** _____ my parents' advice, I **w** _____ probably be rich now.
2. If I **h** _____ studied a bit harder at school, I **m** _____ **h** _____ got decent grades and gone to university.
3. If only I **h** _____ not stolen that car, I **w** _____ **b** _____ in prison now.
4. If I had **d** _____ a bit more preparation for the IELTS exam, I **m** _____ **h** _____ managed to get a good grade.
5. If you **h** _____ drunk a lot of whisky before getting into your car, you **w** _____ not have crashed and **m** _____ not have ended up in hospital.

ANSWERS

1. If **only** I had **taken** my parents' advice, I **would** probably be rich now.
2. If I **had** studied a bit harder at school, I **might have** got decent grades and gone to university.
3. If only I **had** not stolen that car, I **wouldn't be** in prison now.
4. If I had **done** a bit more preparation for the IELTS exam, I **might have** managed to get a good grade.
5. If you **hadn't** drunk a lot of whisky before getting into your car, you **would** not have crashed and **might** not have ended up in hospital.