

WISH

1. "Wish + simple past " is used to talk about states (these wishes are about the present or future)

a) We want the present situation to be different.

⇒ e.g. I wished I lived in New York (I live in London)

I wish I had a Ferrari (I don't)

I wish I were rich (informal was)

b) We also use this structure if we regret something :

⇒ I wish I could sing (but I can't)

2. Wish + would

We use this structure to talk about actions and changes in terms of actions not situations.

a) We use it to express the wish for change in how someone behaves ;

⇒ e.g. I wished you wouldn't smoke.

I wish you wouldn't drive so fast = I want to change your behaviour = please don't drive so fast.

I wish you didn't drive so fast = statement of fact (you do drive fast ; I am sorry you drive fast)

b) We use it when we want someone to do something or something to happen.

⇒ e.g. I wish you would keep quiet - I am trying to sleep (in this sense it is like an order - request)

I wish it would stop raining (it keeps raining)

3. Wish + past perfect

This is used to talk about regrets about the past - about one particular situation.

⇒ e.g. He wishes he had studied harder last year.

I wish I hadn't said that.

I wish you hadn't told me your secret.

If only

It is the same as I wish except it is more emphatic ; we use the same tense as after wish.

1. I wish I knew more people (I'm lonely - state)

If only I knew more people.

I wish I was better looking (I'm ugly - state)

If only I were better looking.

2. I wish it would stop raining.

If only it would stop raining, we could go out.

I wish you wouldn't blow smoke in my face.

If only you wouldn't blow smoke in my face, I'd be able to breathe.

3. I wish you hadn't told me your secret.

If only you hadn't told me your secret, everything would have been fine.

(similar to the third conditional)