

Beginner

The Use of Wish

RULES AND EXAMPLES

1. We can say 'I wish you luck / every success / a happy birthday' etc.:

Examples:

1. I wish you every success in the future.
2. I saw Tim before that exam and he wished me luck.

We say 'wish somebody something' (luck / a happy birthday etc.). But you cannot 'wish' that something happens. We use **hope** in this situation.

Example: I **hope** you **get** this letter before you go away. (*not* I wish you get)

Compare **I wish** and **I hope**:

1. I **wish** you a **pleasant stay** here.
2. I **hope** you **have** a pleasant stay here. (*not* I wish you have)

2. We also use **wish** to say that we regret something, that something is not as we would like it. When we use **wish** in this way, we use the *past* (**knew/lived** etc.), but the meaning is *present*.

Examples:

1. I **wish I knew** what to do about the problem. (I don't know and I regret this)
2. I **wish you didn't** have to go soon. (you have to go)
3. Do you **wish you lived** near the sea? (you don't live near the sea)
4. Jack's going on a trip to Mexico soon. I **wish I was** going too. (I'm not going)

To say that we regret something in the past, we use **wish + had ... (had known / had said)** etc.:

Examples:

1. I **wish I'd known** about the party. I would have gone if I'd known. (I didn't know)
2. It was a stupid thing to say. I **wish I hadn't said it**. (I said it)

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3. **I wish I could (do something)** = I regret that I cannot do it:

Examples:

1. I'm sorry I have to go. **I wish I could stay** longer. (but I can't)
2. I've met that man before. **I wish I could remember** his name. (but I can't)

I wish I could have (done something) = I regret that I could not do it:

Example: I hear the party was great. **I wish I could have gone.** (but I couldn't go)

4. You can say '**I wish (somebody) would (do something)**'. For Example:

It's been raining all day. Jill doesn't like it. She says: **I wish it would stop** raining.

Jill would like the rain to stop, but this will probably not happen.

- a.) We use **I wish ... would** when we would like something to happen or change. Usually, the speaker doesn't expect this to happen.
- b.) We often use **I wish ... would** to complain about a situation:

Examples:

1. The phone has been ringing for five minutes. **I wish** somebody **would answer** it.
2. **I wish** you **would do** something instead of just sitting and doing nothing.

c.) You can use **I wish ... wouldn't ...** to complain about things that people do repeatedly:

Example: **I wish** you **wouldn't keep** interrupting me.

d.) We use **I wish ... would ...** for actions and changes, *not* situations. Compare:

Example:

I wish Sarah **would** come. (= I want her to come) *but*

I wish Sarah **was (or were)** here now. (*not* I wish Sarah would be)