

Wish and If Only Exercises

Level: B1

Talk about a different present

Use *wish* or *if only* with a past form to imagine that a present situation were different. Use *could* for an ability you lack, and *would* for a change you want someone or something to make.

Present situation: *I wish I lived closer.* I do not live close now. After *wish*, use a past form for this unreal present.

If only: *If only I had more time!* means nearly the same as *I wish I had more time*, often with a stronger feeling.

Ability: *I wish I could swim.* *Could* describes an ability I do not have now.

A change you want: *I wish the neighbours would turn down the music.* *Would* expresses a desired change in someone else's behaviour.

Be: *I wish I were taller* is common in careful English; *was* is also heard in informal speech. This lesson uses *were* in its practice items.

Exercise 1: Choose the wish form

Choose the form that matches the meaning of the whole sentence.

1. I don't have a bicycle. I wish I ___ one.
a) have b) had c) would have
2. She can't speak French. She wishes she ___ speak it.
a) can b) could c) would
3. The dog keeps barking at night. I wish it ___ barking.
a) stops b) would stop c) had stopped
4. We live far from our friends. If only we ___ nearer!
a) live b) lived c) will live
5. I am not very tall. In careful English: I wish I ___ taller.
a) am b) were c) will be
6. The train is late again. If only it ___ on time for once!
a) would arrive b) arrives c) has arrived

Exercise 2: Complete the wishes

Use the form in the hint. Type only the missing words.

7. I wish I ___ a larger desk. My books do not fit. (have — unreal present)
8. If only we ___ closer to the park! (live — unreal present)
9. He wishes he ___ play the piano, but he has never learned. (can — ability)

10. I wish the neighbours ___ the music down tonight. (will turn — desired change)
11. She wishes she ___ more confident at work. (be — careful unreal form)
12. If only this rain ___ soon! We want to go out. (will stop — desired change)

Exercise 3: Fix wish and if only

Replace the incorrect verb phrase with the correct form. Keep the rest of the sentence.

13. I wish I have more free time now.

14. She wishes she can swim, but she does not know how.

15. If only we live nearer the station! We are so far away.

16. I wish the bus will come soon; I have been waiting for an hour.

17. I wish I could to play the guitar.

18. He wishes he would can drive, but he has not learned yet.

Answer key

Exercise 1: Choose the wish form

1. b) had
2. b) could
3. b) would stop
4. b) lived
5. b) were
6. a) would arrive

Exercise 2: Complete the wishes

7. had
8. lived
9. could
10. would turn
11. were
12. would stop

Exercise 3: Fix wish and if only

13. I wish I had more free time now.
14. She wishes she could swim, but she does not know how.
15. If only we lived nearer the station! We are so far away.
16. I wish the bus would come soon; I have been waiting for an hour.
17. I wish I could play the guitar.
18. He wishes he could drive, but he has not learned yet.