

Second Conditional & Wish: Hypothetical Situations & Desires

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: Hypothetical present and future, **if + past simple structure, would + base form**, Unlikely or imaginary situations, **Wishing for a different present, Using 'were' vs 'was'**, Imagining changes to current reality, **Modal verbs with wish (could/might)**, **Social expressions (luck/success)**, **Hoping for possible future events**

1. The Second Conditional

We use the **Second Conditional** to talk about imaginary, impossible, or unlikely situations in the present or future. We are imagining a reality different from the current one.

Structure:

If + Subject + Past Simple, Subject + would / could / might + Verb (base form)

- *Reality:* I don't have money. I can't buy a car.
- *Hypothetical (Second Conditional):* If I **had** money, I **would buy** a car.

Important Note on 'To Be':

In the Second Conditional, we traditionally use **were** instead of **was** for all persons (I, he, she, it).

- *Correct:* If I **were** you, I would study harder.
- *Common (Spoken):* If I **was** you... (accepted in informal speech, but stick to **were** for exams).

2. Expressing Regrets: Wish + Past Simple

We use **I wish** or **If only** to say that we want the **present** situation to be different.

Structure:

Subject + wish + (that) + Subject + Past Simple

Even though we use the Past Simple, we are talking about the **present**.

- *Reality:* It is raining right now.
- *Wish:* I wish it **wasn't raining**. (Negative reality → Positive wish, or vice versa).
- *Reality:* I can't swim.
- *Wish:* I wish I **could** swim. (Use **could** for ability).

3. Wish vs. Hope

It is important not to confuse **Wish** and **Hope**.

Feature	Wish	Hope
Meaning	Wanting something impossible or different from reality.	Wanting something possible that might happen in the future.
Grammar	Followed by a Past tense (to show unreality).	Followed by Present or Future tense.
Example	I wish I were rich. (I am not rich).	I hope I become rich. (It is possible).

Social Expressions:

- Use **Wish** + Noun for fixed expressions: *I wish you luck / success / a Happy Birthday.*
- Use **Hope** for future events: *I hope you pass the exam.*

Practice Exercises

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the verbs.

Instructions:

- For **Second Conditional**, use the *Past Simple* in the 'if-clause' and *would/could/might + base verb* in the main clause.
- For **Wish**, use the *Past Simple* (or *could*) to show desire for a different present.
- For **Hope**, use the *Present Simple* for possible future events.
- Pay attention to **Negatives** (not/verb) and **Questions** (subject/verb).

1. If I _____ (have) more free time, I _____ (learn) how to play the piano.
2. I wish I _____ (be) taller so I could reach the top shelf.
3. What _____ (you/do) if you _____ (find) a wallet on the street?
4. I hope she _____ (pass) her driving test tomorrow.
5. If he _____ (not/work) so hard, he _____ (not/be) so tired all the time.
6. I wish I _____ (know) the answer to this question right now.
7. _____ (you/travel) around the world if you _____ (win) the lottery?
8. It is raining heavily. I wish I _____ (have) an umbrella.
9. If I _____ (be) you, I _____ (not/eat) that old sandwich.
10. I wish I _____ (can) speak Spanish fluently, but I find languages difficult.
11. We _____ (buy) a bigger house if housing prices _____ (not/be) so high.
12. I hope the train _____ (not/be) late; I have an important meeting.
13. Where _____ (he/live) if he _____ (can) choose any city in the world?
14. My apartment is too small. I wish I _____ (not/live) here anymore.
15. We _____ (wish) you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Answer Key

1. had / would learn
2. were (or was)
3. would you do / found
4. passes (or will pass)
5. didn't work / wouldn't be
6. knew
7. Would you travel / won
8. had
9. were / wouldn't eat
10. could
11. would buy / weren't (or wasn't)
12. isn't (or won't be)
13. would he live / could
14. didn't live
15. wish