

251 Other ways of expressing a condition

A As long as, provided, etc

As well as *if*, we can use *as long as* or *so long as* to express a condition.

You can smoke as long as you do it outside the building.

I don't care what a car looks like so long as it gets me from A to B.

We can also use *provided (that)*, *providing (that)*, and *on condition that*.

The machine will go on working for years provided (that) it is looked after properly.

We are willing to accept your offer providing (that) payment is made within seven days.

The country was given aid on condition that it signed a trade agreement.

These conjunctions are more formal.

B In case of, with, etc

We can use the prepositions *in case of* and *in the event of*.

In case of fire, break glass. (on a sign)

(= If there is a fire, ...)

In the event of a major emergency, local hospitals would be alerted.

(= If there was a major emergency, ...)

The prepositions *with*, *without*, and *but for* can also express a condition.

With a bit more time, we could do a proper job.

(= If we had a bit more time, ...)

Without my mobile, I would have been in big trouble.

(= If I hadn't had my mobile, ...)

But for the climate, Edinburgh would be a perfect place to live.

(= If it wasn't for the climate, ...)

In that case means 'if that is so'.

I've lost my ticket. ~ In that case you'll have to buy another one.

We can also use *otherwise* to express a condition. It means 'if that is not so'.

I'd better write the address down, otherwise I'll forget it.

C In case

Compare *if* and *in case*.

I'll get some money from the cashpoint if I need some.

(I'll wait until I need some and then get it.)

I'll get some money from the cashpoint in case I need some.

(I'll get it now because I might need it later.)

Here are some more examples with *in case*.

You should insure your belongings in case they get stolen.

(= ... because they might get stolen.)

I left a glass of water by my bed in case I woke up thirsty in the night.

(= ... because I might wake up thirsty in the night.)

We can also use *should* or *might* in a clause with *in case*.

I'll take my mobile in case you should/might need to contact me.

We can use *in case* as an adverbial.

I'll get some money from the cashpoint (just) in case.

But for *in case of*, > B.

NOTE

In American English *in case* can mean the same as *if*.

If you need / In case you need any help, let me know.

if only

We can use *if only* ...! to say that we would like things to be different. It means the same as *I wish* ... (see 630), but is more emphatic. The clause with *if only* often stands alone, without a main clause. Tense use is as follows:

a past to talk about the present

If only I knew more people! If only I was better-looking!

We can use *were* instead of *was* (see 258.4).

If only your father were here!

b *would* + infinitive (without *to*) to talk about the future

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

If only somebody would smile!

c past perfect to talk about the past

If only she hadn't told the police, everything would have been all right.

WISH CLAUSES

1 wish + infinitive

We can use *wish* + infinitive to mean *want*. *Wish* is very formal in this sense. Note that progressive forms are not used.

I wish to see the manager, please. (NOT *I'm wishing to see*...)

If you wish to reserve a table, please telephone after five o'clock.

An object + infinitive structure is also possible.

We do not wish our names to appear in the report.

Wish + direct object is not normal without a following infinitive.

I want / would like an appointment with the manager. (NOT *I wish an appointment with the manager*.)

2 I wish you ...

Wish is used with two objects in some fixed expressions of good wishes.

I wish you a Merry Christmas.

We all wish you a speedy recovery.

Here's wishing you all the best in your new job.

3 wish + that-clause: meaning

We can also use *wish* with a *that*-clause (*that* can be dropped in an informal style). In this case, *wish* does not mean 'want' – it expresses regret that things are not different, and refers to situations that are unreal, impossible or unlikely. Tenses are similar to those used with *if* (see below).

I wish (that) I was better looking.

Don't you wish (that) you could fly?

We all wish (that) the snow would stay forever.

Wish + *that*-clause is not generally used for wishes about things that seem possible in the future. We often use *hope* in this sense (see 250).

I hope you pass your exams. (NOT *I wish you would pass your exams*.)

I hope you feel better tomorrow. (NOT *I wish you felt better tomorrow*.)

4 wish + that-clause: tenses

In a *that*-clause after *wish*, we generally use the same tenses as we would use, for instance, after 'It would be nice if ...' (see 258). Past tenses are used with a present or future meaning.

I wish I spoke French. (= It would be nice if I spoke French.)

I wish I had a yacht. *I wish tomorrow was Sunday.*

All the staff wish you weren't leaving so soon.

Do you ever wish you lived somewhere else?

Wish can be used instead of *was* in this structure, especially in a formal style.

I wish that I were better looking.

Past perfect tenses are used for wishes about the past.

I wish you hadn't said that. (= It would be nice if you hadn't said that.)

Now she wishes she had gone to university.

In informal speech, sentences like *I wish you'd have seen it* sometimes occur.

For similar structures with *if*, see 262.

5 wish ... would

Would is very common in *that*-clauses after *wish* (much more common than it is in *if*-clauses). Sentences with *wish* ... *would* express regret or annoyance that something will not happen.

Everybody wishes you would go home. (= Why won't you go home?)

I wish you would stop smoking. (= Why won't you stop smoking?)

I wish the postman would come soon. (But it looks as if he won't.)

I wish it would stop raining. (= It will keep on raining!)

Don't you wish that this moment would last for ever?

Sentences with *wish* ... *wouldn't* refer to things that do or will happen.

I wish you wouldn't keep making that stupid noise.

(= You will keep making ...)

Wish ... *would(n't)* can be like an order or a critical request. Compare:

– *I wish you wouldn't drive so fast.* (Similar to *Please don't drive so fast*.)

I wish you didn't drive so fast. (More like *I'm sorry you drive so fast*.)

– *I wish you wouldn't work on Sundays.* (= Why don't you stop?)

I wish you didn't work on Sundays. (= It's a pity.)

→ not used in sentences

I wish it was Saturday (would be)

I hope she doesn't have an accident

(× *I wish she wouldn't have*)

CONDITIONAL

CLAUSES

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