



How Do We Use “Wish” for Present, Past and Future Situations?

S06E23 | For teachers to adapt to their learners

Purpose

The verb form after “wish” helps show whether the speaker is imagining a present situation, regretting the past or wanting something to change. In S06E23, Gav and Em compare three patterns.

Try this in your next lesson

Compare I wish I knew the answer with I wish I had checked the answer. Ask whether each concerns now or an earlier event.

Our suggested routine

- ☐ Present situation: “I wish I were taller.” The past form refers to a situation now.
- ☐ Past regret: “I wish I had been better at school.” The past perfect refers to something that happened already.
- ☐ A change the speaker wants: “I wish it would stop raining.” Wish + would can express a desired change.

A classroom example

Give three fictional situations: someone does not know an answer now, did not check yesterday, and is bothered by a noisy machine. Match them to the models, then invent another situation. I wish I were and I wish I was both occur; were is a useful formal model. An ordinary possible future hope may need hope rather than wish + would.

Answers and teacher guidance

Now: I wish I knew. Past regret: I wish I had checked. Desired change: I wish the noise would stop.

After the attempt

What worked? What needs another model or a smaller step? Note one change for next time.

Read the full explanation and examples:
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