



Wish & If Only: Present Wishes: Wish / If Only + Past Simple

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

- I don't have a car. I wish I ____ a car.
a) would have
b) am having
c) have
d) had
- She's not here. If only she ____ here with us.
a) were
b) is
c) would be
d) has been
- I can't play the piano. I wish I ____ play the piano.
a) can
b) am able to
c) could
d) would
- I have to work on Saturdays. I wish I ____ have to work on Saturdays.
a) don't
b) didn't
c) wouldn't
d) won't
- Tom isn't tall enough to play basketball. He wishes he ____ taller.
a) is
b) would be
c) has been
d) were
- We live in a small flat. We wish we ____ in a bigger house.
a) lived
b) would live
c) live
d) are living
- If only I ____ more free time to read books.
a) would have
b) had
c) have
d) am having
- My sister can't swim. She wishes she ____ swim.
a) can
b) would
c) is able to
d) could
- It's raining again. I wish it ____ raining.
a) weren't
b) isn't
c) wouldn't be
d) hasn't been
- He doesn't speak French. He wishes he ____ French.
a) speaks
b) is speaking
c) spoke
d) would speak
- If only we ____ closer to the beach. It's so far away.
a) live
b) would live
c) have lived
d) lived

12. I'm not very good at maths. I wish I ____ better at it.
a) am
b) were
c) would be
d) have been
13. They don't earn much money. They wish they ____ more.
a) earned
b) earn
c) would earn
d) are earning
14. I can't come to your party. I wish I ____ come.
a) can
b) will
c) would
d) could
15. If only my job ____ so stressful. I feel exhausted every day.
a) isn't
b) hasn't been
c) weren't
d) wouldn't be
16. She has to wear a uniform at work. She wishes she ____ have to wear one.
a) didn't
b) doesn't
c) wouldn't
d) won't
17. I don't know the answer. I wish I ____ the answer.
a) would know
b) knew
c) know
d) am knowing
18. We can't afford to go on holiday. If only we ____ afford it.
a) would
b) can
c) could
d) are able to
19. He doesn't understand me. I wish he ____ me better.
a) understands
b) has understood
c) is understanding
d) understood
20. If only the exam ____ so difficult. I'm really worried.
a) wouldn't be
b) isn't
c) weren't
d) won't be



Answers

1. d) had
2. a) were
3. c) could
4. b) didn't
5. d) were
6. a) lived
7. b) had
8. d) could
9. a) weren't
10. c) spoke
11. d) lived
12. b) were
13. a) earned
14. d) could
15. c) weren't
16. a) didn't
17. b) knew
18. c) could
19. d) understood
20. c) weren't



Explanations

1. “had” (d)

After 'wish', use past simple to talk about present wishes. 'I wish I had' means I don't have a car now, but I want one. Don't use present simple or 'would' here.

2. “were” (a)

'If only' works exactly like 'wish' — use past simple. After wish/if only, we use 'were' for all subjects (I/he/she/it were), not 'was'. This is the subjunctive form.

3. “could” (c)

'Wish + could' expresses a wish about ability. 'I wish I could play' means I can't play now, but I want to be able to. 'Could' is the past form of 'can', following the past simple rule after wish.

4. “didn't” (b)

For negative present wishes, use 'didn't + base verb'. 'I wish I didn't have to work' means I have to work now, but I wish it weren't so. Don't use 'don't' (present simple) after wish.

5. “were” (d)

After 'wish', use 'were' (not 'was' or 'is') with all subjects: I were, he were, she were. 'He wishes he were taller' expresses an unreal present situation using the subjunctive.

6. “lived” (a)

Use past simple after wish: 'We wish we lived'. This expresses dissatisfaction with the current living situation — we live in a small flat but want a bigger house.

7. “had” (b)

'If only' follows the same grammar as 'wish'. Use past simple: 'If only I had'. The speaker doesn't have enough free time now and wishes the situation were different.

8. “could” (d)

'Wish + could' is used for wishes about ability. 'She wishes she could swim' means she can't swim now but wants to. 'Could' follows the past tense rule after wish.

9. “weren't” (a)

Use 'weren't' (past simple negative of 'be') after wish. 'I wish it weren't raining' describes wanting the current weather to be different. Use 'weren't' for all subjects in wish sentences.

10. “spoke” (c)

Past simple after wish: 'He wishes he spoke French'. 'Speak' is irregular — past simple is 'spoke'. He can't speak French now, so this is an unreal present wish.

11. “lived” (d)

'If only we lived closer' = 'We wish we lived closer'. Past simple after if only, expressing a present wish about where we live. The reality is we live far from the beach.

12. “were” (b)

After wish, use 'were' (subjunctive) with all subjects, not 'am' or 'was'. 'I wish I were better at maths' expresses an unreal present situation — I'm not good at maths but want to be.

13. “earned” (a)

Past simple after wish: 'They wish they earned more'. This expresses dissatisfaction with their current salary — they don't earn much now but wish they did.

14. “could” (d)

'Wish + could' expresses a wish about ability or possibility. 'I wish I could come' means I'm unable to come but I want to. Don't confuse with 'would' — 'could' is about ability, 'would' is about willingness.

15. “weren't” (c)

Negative wish with 'be': use 'weren't' after if only/wish. 'If only my job weren't so stressful' means the job IS stressful, but the speaker wishes it weren't. Use 'weren't' for all subjects.

16. “didn't” (a)

Negative past simple after wish: 'She wishes she didn't have to'. She has to wear a uniform now — this is a present wish about changing that obligation. Use 'didn't', not 'doesn't'.

17. “knew” (b)

Past simple: 'I wish I knew'. 'Know' is irregular — past simple is 'knew'. The speaker doesn't know the answer now but wishes they did. 'Am knowing' is also wrong because 'know' is a stative verb.

18. “could” (c)

'If only + could' expresses a wish about ability, just like 'wish + could'. 'If only we could afford it' means we can't afford it but wish we could. 'If only' adds more emotion than 'wish'.

19. “understood” (d)

Past simple after wish: 'I wish he understood'. 'Understand' is irregular — past simple is 'understood'. This expresses a present wish about the current state of a relationship. 'Is understanding' is wrong because 'understand' is a stative verb.

20. “weren't” (c)

'If only + weren't' for a present wish with 'be'. The exam IS difficult, and the speaker wishes it weren't. Remember: after wish/if only, always use 'were/weren't' (subjunctive), not 'is/isn't'.