



Wish & If Only:

Advanced Wishes and Regrets: As If, Would Rather, If Only & Unreal Past

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

- The director spoke with such authority about the archaeological site as though she ____ there on the original expedition decades earlier.
a) had been
b) was
c) would be
d) has been
- Despite having no formal training, he handles the negotiations as if he ____ a seasoned diplomat.
a) is
b) were
c) had been
d) would be
- When the audit results were announced, the finance manager reacted as if she ____ about the discrepancies all along.
a) knows
b) would know
c) had known
d) was knowing
- My colleague treats every minor inconvenience as though it ____ a catastrophe of global proportions.
a) is
b) has been
c) would be
d) were
- After reading just one chapter, the student discussed the novel as though she ____ the entire book twice.
a) had read
b) reads
c) has read
d) would read
- The project deadline is tomorrow, but I'd rather you ____ the proposal until you're completely satisfied with it.
a) don't submit
b) won't submit
c) hadn't submitted
d) didn't submit
- Given how the situation escalated, I'd rather we ____ the clients about the delay sooner.
a) informed
b) had informed
c) would inform
d) inform
- I know you want to help, but I'd sooner ____ this problem on my own.
a) handled
b) to handle
c) handle
d) handling
- The board would rather the CEO ____ the restructuring plan at next week's meeting rather than today.
a) presented
b) presents
c) will present
d) had presented



Answers

1. a) had been
2. b) were
3. c) had known
4. d) were
5. a) had read
6. d) didn't submit
7. b) had informed
8. c) handle
9. a) presented
10. d) had accepted
11. b) had invested
12. c) had paid
13. d) had gone
14. a) had told
15. b) had
16. c) wishes
17. d) wish
18. a) would do
19. b) offered
20. c) implemented



Explanations

1. “had been” (a)

'As though' + past perfect for an unreal past situation. She was NOT on the original expedition, but she speaks as if she was. The time marker 'decades earlier' establishes a past-before-past relationship, requiring past perfect. 'Was' (past simple) after as though would suggest a simultaneous unreal comparison, but the expedition happened long before the speaking.

2. “were” (b)

'As if' + subjunctive 'were' for a present unreal situation. He is NOT a diplomat, but he acts like one now. Use 'were' (not 'was') for all subjects in as if/as though clauses expressing present unreality. 'Had been' (past perfect) would suggest a past unreal situation, but 'handles' (present tense) confirms this is about the present. 'Is' would imply you believe he might actually be a diplomat.

3. “had known” (c)

'As if' + past perfect because the hypothetical knowing would have started BEFORE the announcement. 'All along' indicates continuous prior knowledge, which requires past perfect to show the knowing preceded the announcement. 'Knows' (present) doesn't fit the past narrative. 'Would know' is not standard after as if. 'Was knowing' is ungrammatical — 'know' is a stative verb and cannot be used in continuous forms.

4. “were” (d)

'As though' + subjunctive 'were' for a present unreal comparison. Minor inconveniences are clearly NOT global catastrophes — this is unreal. 'Were' (subjunctive) is used for all subjects after as if/as though to express unreality. 'Is' (present simple) would suggest the speaker genuinely believes the inconveniences are catastrophes. 'Would be' is not the standard construction after as if/as though.

5. “had read” (a)

'As though' + past perfect for a past unreal situation. She had NOT read the entire book, but after reading one chapter, she discussed it as if she had. Past perfect is required because the hypothetical reading (the whole book) would have been completed before the discussion. 'Reads' (present simple) is wrong in a past narrative. 'Has read' (present perfect) breaks sequence-of-tenses rules. 'Would read' is not standard after as though.

6. “didn't submit” (d)

'Would rather' + past simple when the subjects are different (I'd rather YOU...). Use past simple for present/future preferences about another person's actions. 'Didn't submit' refers to a future action you want the other person NOT to do — despite looking like a past form, it functions as a subjunctive. 'Hadn't submitted' (past perfect) would be for regretting a past action that already happened. 'Don't submit' (present simple) is incorrect after would rather with a different subject.

7. “had informed” (b)

'Would rather' + past perfect when expressing regret about a past action with a different subject. 'I'd rather we had informed' means we DIDN'T inform them sooner, and I regret it. The past context ('how the situation escalated') confirms this is about a past action. 'Informed' (past simple) would express a present/future preference, but the escalation has already happened.

8. “handle” (c)

'Would sooner' + bare infinitive when the subject is the same (I'd sooner handle). This follows the same pattern as 'would rather + bare infinitive' with the same subject. No 'to' before the infinitive — 'to handle' is incorrect. 'Handled' (past simple) would be used if there were a different subject ('I'd sooner you handled this'). 'Handling' (gerund) is not used with would sooner/rather.

9. “presented” (a)

'Would rather' + past simple for a present/future preference about a different subject (the board prefers what the CEO should do). 'Presented' (past simple) expresses a preference about a future action — the meeting hasn't happened yet. 'Had presented' (past perfect) would imply regret about a past action, which contradicts 'next week's meeting'. 'Presents' and 'will present' are incorrect after would rather with a different subject.

10. “had accepted” (d)

Mixed time-frame wish: past regret ('I didn't accept the job five years ago') leading to a present counterfactual consequence ('I'm stuck now'). Use wish + past perfect (had accepted) for the past regret. 'Five years ago' anchors the regret firmly in the past. 'Accepted' (past simple) would express a present wish, not a past regret. 'Could accept' would be about present ability, not a past missed opportunity.

11. “had invested” (b)

Mixed time-frame wish: past regret ('the government didn't invest a decade ago') leading to a present consequence ('we're facing shortages today'). 'If only' + past perfect for the past regret. The time marker 'a decade ago' confirms past perfect is needed. 'Invested' (past simple) would express a present unreal wish about current investment, not a regret about the past. 'Would invest' is grammatically incorrect after if only.

12. “had paid” (c)

Mixed time-frame wish: past regret ('she didn't pay attention to warnings') leading to a present consequence ('she's in debt now'). Wish + past perfect (had paid) for the past regret. 'Paid' (past simple) would mean she wishes she paid attention now (present wish), which doesn't match the context of past warnings leading to current consequences. 'Would pay' implies frustration about someone's behaviour, not regret about one's own past choices.

13. “had gone” (d)

'Suppose' + past perfect for an unreal past hypothetical. The company did NOT go bankrupt, but we're imagining what would have happened if it had. 'Last year' confirms this is a past scenario. The main clause uses 'would you have been able to' (past conditional), which requires past perfect in the suppose clause. 'Went' (past simple) would be for a present/future hypothetical ('Suppose the company went bankrupt tomorrow').

14. “had told” (a)

'What if' + past perfect for an unreal past scenario. The witness did NOT tell the truth, and we're speculating about an alternative outcome. 'During the trial' and 'might have been different' both confirm this is about a completed past event. 'Told' (past simple) would be for a present/future hypothetical, not a past one. 'Tells' (present) would suggest a real, possible future scenario.

15. “had” (b)

'Imagine' + past perfect for a past counterfactual. The internet WAS invented, so imagining it was never invented requires past perfect: 'had never been invented'. 'Has never been invented' (present perfect) would suggest it genuinely hasn't been invented, which contradicts reality. 'Would have never been invented' places the conditional in the wrong clause. 'Having never been invented' is a participle form that doesn't work in this construction.

16. “wishes” (c)

'Wish + to infinitive' is the standard formal register in corporate and institutional communications for expressing intent. 'The Board wishes to announce' is the appropriate choice for shareholder letters and official statements. 'Wants to announce' is grammatically correct but too informal for this context. 'Hopes to announce' implies uncertainty about whether the announcement will happen, undermining the directive tone. 'Is wanting' is ungrammatical — 'want' as a stative verb is not normally used in continuous form.

17. “wish” (d)

'Should you wish to' is a fixed formal expression used in professional and hospitality contexts, equivalent to 'If you would like to'. 'Wish + to infinitive' is the most formal and appropriate register here. 'Want' is too direct and informal for this polished customer-facing tone. 'Like' does not collocate naturally with 'should you'. 'Hope' changes the meaning entirely — hoping implies uncertainty about the customer's intentions.

18. “would do” (a)

'Wish + would' expresses frustration and annoyance about someone's inaction or unwillingness to change. The speaker is irritated that the council hasn't taken action ('nobody seems to care', 'for months'). 'Did' (past simple) would express a calm, general wish about the situation, but the frustrated tone and emphasis on the council's neglect make 'would do' the better choice — it targets the council's behaviour and implies a desire for them to change. 'Had done' (past perfect) would be a past regret, not appropriate here.

19. “offered” (b)

'Wish + past simple' for a reflective, general present wish about a state of affairs. The tone is contemplative ('quiet moments of reflection'), not frustrated or complaining about anyone's specific behaviour. 'Would offer' (wish + would) would imply frustration directed at her employer for deliberately withholding creative opportunities, but the context shows she's simply musing about what she'd ideally like while appreciating her current situation. 'Had offered' (past perfect) would be a past regret, not a present wish. 'Has offered' (present perfect) is grammatically incorrect after wish.

20. “implemented” (c)

'It's high time' + past simple expresses that something is overdue and should be done now. 'Implemented' (past simple) is correct despite referring to a present/future action that needs to happen — this is the same unreal past construction used after wish and if only. 'Had implemented' (past perfect) is occasionally accepted as an emphatic variant, but 'high time' already provides emphasis, making past simple the standard and expected choice. 'Implements' (present) and 'would implement' are both grammatically incorrect after 'it's time'.