

JCGL

Swan, M. (2005) *Practical English Usage*, 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press

WISH / IF ONLY

WISH

1. WISH + To-inf. = WANT

Wish is formal in this sense. Progressive forms are not used.

I wish to see the manager, please.

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

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.

3. WISH + *that*-clause

- *Wish* expresses regret that things are not different, and refers to situations that are unreal, impossible or unlikely.

Don't you wish you could fly?

- This structure is not generally used for wishes about things that seem possible in the future. *Hope* is often used in this sense.

I hope you pass your exams.

~~*I wish you would pass your exams.*~~

- Past tenses are used with a present or future meaning. *Were* is common in a formal style.

I wish I spoke French.
I wish I were good-looking.

- Past perfect tenses are used for wishes (regrets) about the past.

Now she wishes she had gone to university.

4. WISH + *would*

- This construction usually expresses regret, dissatisfaction, impatience or irritation because someone will keep doing something or won't do something.

I wish she would be quiet.

- Sometimes we talk as if things and situations could be willing or unwilling, or could insist or refuse to do things.

I wish it would stop raining!

- It can often be like an order or a critical request.

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.)

IF ONLY

1. The meaning is similar to the one of *wish* above, although it is generally more emphatic, expressing a strong wish.

If only I were better looking!

If only someone would smile!

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

2. *If only!* often stands alone, without a main clause. Cf. Spanish *ojalá*, Galician *oxalá*.

- “*It looks as if it's going to stop raining!*”
- “*If only!*”