

Using “Wish” to Talk About the Past

When do we use this grammar topic?

When we say “**I wish + past perfect**”, we’re expressing **regret** or **disappointment** about something that already happened (or didn’t happen). We’re imagining a different past one we can’t change now.

Grammar Structure

wish + past perfect

We use the **past perfect** (had + past participle) because the event happened **before now**.

Examples in Context

Situation	Real Past	Wish Sentence
You failed a test	I didn’t study.	I wish I had studied for the test.
You forgot your friend’s birthday	I didn’t call her.	I wish I had called her on her birthday.
You were late to an interview	I left home too late.	I wish I had left earlier.

These wishes are **not** about the future or the present, they are strictly about **something that happened (or didn’t happen)** in the past.

Important Notes:

- Don’t use “would” or “could” in this structure.
 - ✗ *I wish I would studied* → Incorrect
 - ✓ *I wish I had studied* → Correct
- The verb after “had” is always in the **past participle form**:
 - go → gone → I wish I had gone.
 - see → seen → I wish I had seen it.
 - do → done → I wish I had done more.