

Lesson Plan: Wish / if only for past regrets 2

Level	Advanced (C1)
Time	60–90 minutes
Skills	Grammar, speaking, writing
Focus	Wish + past perfect; if only; contrasting with third conditional

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Use wish + past perfect and if only + past perfect for past regrets
- Understand the emotional intensity of if only vs. wish
- Distinguish wish / if only from the third conditional in function and effect
- Use these structures naturally in creative and personal writing

TARGET LANGUAGE (EXAMPLES)

Wish + past perfect

- I wish I had saved more money when I was young.
- She wishes she hadn't said what she did.
- We wish we had taken more photos on that trip.

If only + past perfect (stronger emotion)

- If only I had listened to her advice.
- If only they hadn't sold the house when prices were low.
- If only I had known — I would have done things differently.

Contrast with third conditional

- Third conditional: If I had saved more, I would have had enough. (cause-effect reasoning)
- Wish: I wish I had saved more. (emotional regret, no stated consequence)

Combining forms

- If only I had applied for that position — I wish I had taken the risk.
- She wishes she had been braver. If only she had ignored the criticism.

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up (10 min)

Task: Students write one genuine regret (can be fictional) on a card.

- Teacher reads some aloud. The class transforms them into wish/if only sentences.

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: Wish + past perfect vs. if only + past perfect: form and emotional weight.

- If only = stronger, more dramatic. Useful in creative writing.
- Compare with third conditional: regret + reflection vs. regret + consequence.

- Common error: 'I wish I would have...' (American colloquial but not standard).

3. Guided practice (10 min)

Task: Rewrite statements as wish / if only sentences.

- 'I didn't apply for the scholarship. That was a mistake.' → 'I wish I had applied...' / 'If only I had applied...'
- Which version feels more intense?

4. Creative writing task (25 min)

Task: Write a monologue from the perspective of someone near the end of their life reflecting on regrets.

- Must include at least 3 wish + past perfect and 2 if only + past perfect.
- Share: how does the emotional weight of if only change the effect?

5. Discussion (5–10 min)

Task: Is regret useful? Discuss in English using these structures.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one:

1. Write a letter to your past self expressing regrets using wish and if only.
2. Compare: write the same regret as a third conditional and as wish/if only. Explain the difference in effect.
3. Write a short monologue (100–120 words) full of regret using these structures throughout.