

Lesson Plan: Expressing regret & wishes ("if only")

Level: Advanced (C1/C2)

Time: 60–90 minutes

Focus: grammar (subjunctive), vocabulary (emotions, regrets), speaking, writing

Objectives:

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand the grammatical structure of "if only" for regrets and hypothetical wishes.
- Use "if only" correctly in past, present, and future contexts.
- Improve fluency by discussing personal and imagined situations.

Materials

- Whiteboard/Markers or Slides
- Handouts with practice activities
- Audio/Video clip (optional) showing natural use of "if only"
- Scenario cards for speaking activity

Lesson Procedure

1. Warm-Up (10 mins)

Activity:

Ask students:

- *What's something small you regret from this morning? This week? This year?*

Write responses on the board and highlight how they express regret. Then ask:

- *How could you express that regret more emotionally or formally?*

Transition to:

"We often use 'if only' to express regret or longing in a more dramatic or emotional way."

2. Explanation and Form (15 mins)

Present the structure of "if only":

Time Reference	Structure	Example
Past regret	If only + past perfect	<i>If only I had studied harder.</i>
Present regret	If only + past simple	<i>If only I knew his number.</i>
Future wish/desire	If only + would	<i>If only he would listen.</i>

Emphasize:

- Difference between **regret (past)** and **wish (future)**
- "If only" often implies **strong emotion** (frustration, sadness, hope)

3. Controlled Practice (10–15 mins)

Worksheet – Complete the sentences:

1. If only I _____ (not/eat) so much cake.
2. If only we _____ (have) more time today.
3. If only he _____ (call) me back last night.

Peer check, then **class correction**.

4. Listening/Speaking Activity (Optional - 10 mins)

Audio/Video Clip (TV scene, interview, or speech):

Students listen and identify any uses of "if only".

Discuss the emotional weight and meaning.

5. Communicative Practice (15–20 mins)

Scenario Cards (in pairs or groups):

- A student failed an exam.
- A person missed a flight.
- Someone argued with a friend.
- A team lost a big match.

Task: Discuss what the person might say using "if only".

Sample output:

- *If only I had double-checked the gate number!*
- *If only she wouldn't be so stubborn.*

Encourage creativity and emotional expression.

6. Writing Task (10–15 mins)

Students write a short paragraph (6–8 sentences) about a personal or imagined regret using "if only" at least twice.

Optional extension: Write a dialogue between two characters reflecting on a shared regret.

7. Wrap-Up and Recap (5 mins)

Quick recap:

- When do we use "if only"?
- What does it express?
- What's the difference between "if only I had" and "if only he would"?

Ask for **volunteers** to share one sentence or paragraph.

Homework

Write a journal entry titled "*If only I could go back...*" (150–200 words)