

# UNIT 37 If and wish sentences (present)

## a) Study this example situation:

Tom wants to telephone Sue but he can't do this because he doesn't know her telephone number. He says:

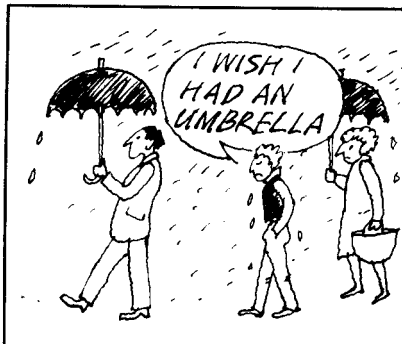
**If I knew her number, I would telephone her.**

Tom says 'If I knew her number ...'. This tells us that he doesn't know her number. He is imagining the situation. The real situation is that he doesn't know her number.

When you imagine a situation like this, you use a *past* tense ('I did / I was / I knew' etc.) after *if*. But the meaning is present, not past:

- Tom would travel **if he had** more money. (but he doesn't have much money)
- **If I didn't** want to go, I wouldn't. (but I want to go)
- We wouldn't have any money **if we didn't** work. (but we work)

## b) We also use the past for a present situation after **wish**. We use **wish** to say that we regret something, that something is not as we would like it to be:



I wish I knew Sue's telephone number. (I don't know it.)

Do you ever wish you could fly? (You can't fly.)

I wish it didn't rain so much in England. (It rains a lot.)

It's crowded here. I wish there weren't so many people. (There are a lot of people.)

I wish I didn't have to work. (I have to work.)

## c) In *if* sentences and after **wish** you can use **were** instead of **was**:

- If I **were** you, I wouldn't buy that coat. (or 'If I **was** you')
- I'd go out if it **weren't** raining. (or 'if it **wasn't** raining')
- I wish my room **were** larger. (or 'I wish my room **was** larger.')

## d) Do not use **would** in the *if* part of the sentence or after **wish**:

- If I **were** rich, I would buy a castle. (*not* 'if I **would** be rich')
- I wish I **were** taller. (*not* 'I wish I **would** be taller.')

But sometimes **I wish ... would ...** is possible. See Unit 39.

**Could** sometimes means 'would be able to' and sometimes 'was able to':

- She **could** (= would be able to) get a job more easily if she **could** (= was able to) type.

For *if* sentences and **wish** see also Units 36, 38 and 39.

# UNIT 37 Exercises

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## 37.1 In this exercise you have to put the verb into the correct form.

Examples: If I ..... knew ..... (know) her number, I would telephone her.  
I ..... wouldn't buy ..... (not/buy) that coat if I were you.

- 1 I ..... (give) you a cigarette if I had one but I'm afraid I haven't.
  - 2 This soup would taste better if it ..... (have) more salt in it.
  - 3 If you ..... (not/go) to bed so late every night, you wouldn't be so tired all the time.
  - 4 I wouldn't mind living in England if the weather ..... (be) better.
  - 5 I'd help you if I ..... (can) but I'm afraid I can't.
  - 6 If I were you, I ..... (not/marry) him.
  - 7 We would happily buy that house if it ..... (not/be) so small.
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## 37.2 This time you have to read a situation and write a sentence with if.

Example: We don't visit you very often because you live so far away.  
But if you didn't live so far away, we would visit you more often.

- 1 People don't understand him because he doesn't speak very clearly.  
But if he ....., people .....
  - 2 I'm not going to buy that book because it's too expensive.  
But if that book .....
  - 3 She doesn't go out very often because she can't walk without help.  
But if .....
  - 4 He's fat because he doesn't take any exercise.  
But .....
  - 5 We can't have lunch in the garden because it's raining.  
.....
  - 6 I can't meet you tomorrow evening because I have to work.  
.....
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## 37.3 Now you have to write sentences with I wish ...

Example: I don't know many people (and I'm lonely). I wish I knew more people.

- 1 I can't give up smoking (but I'd like to). I wish I .....
- 2 I haven't any cigarettes (and I need one). I wish .....
- 3 George isn't here (and I need him). I wish George .....
- 4 It's cold (and I hate cold weather). I wish .....
- 5 I live in London (and I hate London). I .....
- 6 Tina can't come to the party (she's your best friend). I .....
- 7 I have to work tomorrow (but I'd like to stay in bed). .....
- 8 I don't know anything about cars (and my car has just broken down).  
.....
- 9 I'm not lying on a beautiful sunny beach (and that's a pity).  
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