



Giving a presentation to a large audience is many people's greatest fear ...

Presentation

There are a number of structures in English that are followed by past tenses which have a present or future meaning. We use these structures to express unreal or hypothetical situations.

would rather / would just as soon

We use *would rather* or *would just as soon* + subject + past tense to express a preference:

I'd rather I didn't have to do this.

I'd just as soon you did this instead.

It is also possible to use *I'd rather* and *I'd just as soon* + infinitive without *to* when there is no change of subject:

I'd rather not do it. (= *I'd rather I didn't do it.*)

However, if the subject changes, we use the past tense:

I'd rather he didn't do it. (not *I'd rather he not do it.*)

I wish / If only

We use *I wish* and *if only* to express regrets and wishes for things that are unlikely to happen. *If only* has a more emphatic meaning than *I wish*:

I wish / If only you didn't live so far away.

We use the past perfect to express regrets about the past:

I wish / If only I'd spent more time preparing. (= but I didn't)

We use *wish* + *would* to express a wish for action – for someone to do something about a situation or for the situation/action to stop:

I wish you would help me prepare.

We also use *would* + *wish* to talk about another person's annoying habits or unwillingness to do / not do something:

I wish / If only she would listen to my presentation

I wish she wouldn't talk while I'm speaking.

Notice that we don't use *would* if the subjects in both clauses are the same:

I wish I didn't live here. (not *I wish I wouldn't live here.*)

what if / supposing / suppose

We can use *what if*, *supposing* and *suppose* at the beginning of a question to ask about the consequences of something:

What if you forgot your lines – what would you do?

We can also use these structures to make suggestions:

Supposing / Suppose they had a new job for you – would you accept the offer?

What if is more informal than *suppose* and *supposing*.

Note: You can use *were* instead of *was*, especially in a formal style:

I wish I was/were somewhere else.

Supposing no one was/were to turn up.

it's (high) time

We use *it's time* + subject + past tense to say that something needs to be done very soon. We can use *high* to add emphasis: *It's (high) time I had a holiday.*

1 Match the two halves of the sentence.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---|
| 1 I'd rather you | a invite them this time? |
| 2 I'd just as | b didn't invite them. |
| 3 I'd rather not | c wouldn't always invite them. |
| 4 It's high | d soon you didn't invite them. |
| 5 If | e you'd invite them. |
| 6 I wish | f time we invited them. |
| 7 I wish she | g only you hadn't invited them. |
| 8 What if we didn't | h we didn't invite them this time. |
| 9 Supposing | i invite them. |
| 10 I | j wish you hadn't invited them. |

2 Rewrite the first sentences so it has the same meaning using the word given.

- I'd rather we all left together.
soon I'd just as soon we all left together.
- I'd rather I didn't have to give this presentation.
not this presentation.
- I wish they hadn't asked me that question.
only me that question.
- Can you tell them to stop shouting?
wish stop shouting.
- It's so annoying when he interrupts.
wouldn't interrupt.
- What are the consequences of me leaving early today?
what if early today?
- What if your car breaks down?
supposing breaks down.
- Very soon I need to take some time off from work.
time some time off from work.

3 Complete the sentences so they are true for you.

- This week I'd rather
- I wish
- What if I
- Supposing
- It's high time I