

If I do...I will... or If I did... I would...?

1) Compare these examples:

• Sue .has lost her watch. She thinks it may be at Ann's house.
Sue "I think I left my watch at your house. Have you seen it?"
Ann "No, but I'll have a look when I get home. If I find it, I'll call you."

➤ In this example, Ann feels there is a real possibility that she will find the watch. So she says: "If I find it, I'll call you."

• Ann says: "If I found a wallet in the street, I would take it to the police."

➤ This is a different type of situation. Here, Ann is not thinking about a real possibility; she is imagining the situation and doesn't expect to find a wallet in the street. So she says: "If I found a wallet, I would call the police."

2) When you imagine something like this, you use **if + past** (if I found, If I were, if we didn't go etc...), but **the meaning is not past**.

- "What **would** you do if you **won** a million pounds?"
(We don't really expect this to happen.)
- "I **don't** really want to go to their party, but I probably will go. They'd be offended if I **didn't** go."

I wish I did...

Study this example:

• Sue wants to phone Paul but she can't because she doesn't know his number.
She says: "If I knew his number I would call him. I **wish** I **had** his number."

➤ After **wish**, we use the past in the same way as with **if** (**I wish I knew**, **I wish I were** etc...). So **the meaning is not past**. We use **wish** to say that we **regret** something, that **something is not as we would like it to be**.

- "Do you ever **wish** you **could** fly?" (you can't fly)
- It rains a lot here. I **wish** it **didn't** rain so much. (but it rains)

Exercises

1) Use your own ideas to complete these sentences:

- If you took more exercise, _____
- I'd feel very angry if _____
- If I didn't go to work tomorrow, _____
- Would you go to a party if _____

2) Write sentences beginning with "I wish":

- I don't know many people and I feel lonely. _____
- Ann is not here and I need to see her. _____
- I can't go to the party and I'd like to. _____
- I'm not lying on a beach and it's a pity. _____