



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.*

## Exercises

### 1 Match the two halves of the sentence.

- |                           |                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1 I'd rather you .....    | a invite them this time?           |
| 2 I'd just as .....       | b <del>didn't invite them.</del>   |
| 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 sentence 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.
- I really need to take some time off work soon.  
**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 .....