Present

We wish when we want reality to be different than it is. Therefore, negative statements become positive wishes and vice versa.

Reality   Wish

I **am** <u>not</u> rich. (−)   I wish (that) I **were** rich. (+)
I **do** <u>not</u> **own** my home. (−)   I wish (that) I **owned** my home. (+)
I **own** my home. (+)   I wish (that) I **did**<u>n't</u> own my home. (−)

When making a **present wish** we use the **subjunctive** form of the verb. The subjunctive with *wish* looks the same as the past tense for all verbs except *to be*. *Were* is the subjunctive form of the verb *to be*. You may hear and see *was.* Some people consider its use to be substandard.

Reality   Wish

I **don't have** a new car. (−)   I wish (that) I **had** a new car. (+)
I **can't play** the piano. (−)   I wish (that) I **could play** the piano. (+)
I **have to go** to work. (+)   I wish (that) I **didn't** have to go to work. (−**)**
I**'m going** to the concert. (−**)**   I wish (that) I **weren't going** to the concert. (−**)**

Past

We wish we could change the reality of a past action or situation.

Reality   Wish

I **didn't call** my mother. (−)   I wish (that) I **had called** my mother. (+)
I **bought** a new car. (+)   I wish (that) I **hadn't bought** a new car. (−)
I **didn't buy** that painting. (−)   I wish (that) I **had bought** that painting. (+)
The weather **was** cold. (+)   I wish (that) the weather **hadn't been** cold. (−)

We use the past perfect to make a wish about something in the past.

Contrast Wishes

I **am** *poor*. (present)   I wish (that) I **were** *rich*.
I **feel** *sad*.   I wish (that) I **felt** *happy*.
The weather **was** *cold*. (past)   I wish (that) the weather **had been** *warm*.
The weather **wasn't** *hot*.   I wish (that) the weather **hadn't been** *cold*.

Using *contrasting vocabulary* is another way to create a sense of different reality.