

USE SHOULD HAVE / WOULD HAVE

INTRODUCTION

Talking about the past: “Should Have” and “Would Have”

Sometimes we think about the past and say:

“That was a mistake. I should have done something different.”

or

“If I had done that, things would have been better.”

We use:

- **Should have** to say what was a better idea in the past.
- **Would have** to imagine a different result in the past.

In this lesson, you will:

- Learn how to use **should have** and **would have** in simple sentences.
- Talk about small regrets and missed opportunities
- Write about problems, regrets and better solutions.

A time I didn't...

Think of a small situation in your past:

- You didn't study for a test.
- You didn't call a friend.
- You went to bed very late.

In your notebook write 3-4 sentences in simple past:

- What happened?
- How did you feel?

Example:

Last week, I didn't study for my exam. I went to bed late and I was very tired. I got a bad grade and I felt sad.

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We are not using should have or would have yet; we are only introducing the idea of the **past + a small mistake**.

VOCABULARY

1 Vocabulary for talking about mistakes and regrets

Word / phrase	Example
Regret (verb/noun)	I regret not studying.
Mistake	It was a big mistake.
Past	In the past, I was very shy.
Promise	I broke my promise.
Late	I arrived late to class.
Forget	I forgot my homework.

2 Vocabulary for consequences and solutions

Word / phrase	Example
Result	The result was a bad grade.
Problem	This created a problem with my teacher.
Solution	I need a solution for this problem.
Next time	Next time, I will start earlier.
Different	Things would be different now.
Better / worse	It would be better if I had studied.

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GRAMMAR - *SHOULD HAVE / WOULD HAVE*

MODALS OF LOST OPPORTUNITIES

Modals of lost opportunity show something that almost happened but didn't. To use them, add the past participle verb after the modals. You can also use not for a negative sentence.

COULD HAVE	SHOULD HAVE	WOULD HAVE
Could is one of the modals in the past that indicates possibility or polite requests. I could have applied for the job, but I didn't want to.	Should have means something would have been a great decision or action. However, you didn't do it. I should have studied for the test.	Would have is to discuss something you wanted to do but didn't. I would have been there, but you didn't call me.

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3 Form

Should have + past participle

→ To say what someone should have done in the past, but didn't do.

Structure:

Subject + should have + past participle

Examples:

- I failed the test.
*I **should have studied** more.*
- I was very tired this morning.
*I **should have gone** to bed earlier.*

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- I forgot my friend's birthday.
*I **should have called** her.*
- I argued with my brother.
*I **should have stayed** calm.*
- I lost my keys.
*I **should have put** them in my bag.*
- I didn't do my homework.
*I **should have done** my homework yesterday.*
- I spent too much money on games.
*I **should have saved** my money.*
- I arrived late to class.
*I **should have left** home earlier.*

Would have + past participle

→ To imagine a different result in the past.

Structure:

Subject + would have + past participle

Examples:

- I failed the test.
*If I had studied, I **would have passed** the test.*
- I was very tired in the morning.
*If I had gone to bed earlier, I **would have felt** better.*
- I didn't call my friend. She was sad.
*If I had called her, she **would have been** happier.*
- I didn't bring my umbrella. It rained a lot.
*If I had brought my umbrella, I **would have stayed** dry.*
- I didn't go to the party.
*If I had gone to the party, I **would have met** new people.*

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- I didn't save my money.
*If I had saved my money, I **would have bought** a new phone.*
- I didn't listen to the teacher.
*If I had listened, I **would have understood** the lesson.*
- I didn't arrive on time.
*If I had arrived earlier, I **would have got** a good seat.*

SHOULD HAVE- EXPRESSING REGRET AND MILD CRITICISM

We use should have to look back at the past and say what would have been better to do:

- *I failed the exam. I **should have studied** more.*
- *I was late. I **should have left** home earlier.*
- *I forgot my friend's birthday. I **should have called** her.*

Negative

- *I **shouldn't have spent** so much money.*
- *I **shouldn't have shouted** at my brother.*

WOULD HAVE- IMAGINED OUTCOME

With would have, we talk about a different result that could have happened if we had done something.

- *I failed the exam. If I had studied, I **would have passed**.*
- *I missed the bus. If I had left earlier, I **would have arrived on time**.*
- *If I had studied, I **would have got** a better grade.*
- *If I had slept more, I **would have felt** better.*

SIMPLE VISUAL SUMMARY

Example 1.

Past action (problem):

I didn't study.

Better action (advice about the past):

/should have studied.

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Imagined result:

/would have passed the exam.

Example 2.

Past action (problem):

I didn't study for the test.

Better action (should have):

I should have studied for the test.

Imagined result (would have):

I would have passed the test.

Example 3.

Past action (problem):

I went to bed very late.

Better action (should have):

I should have gone to bed earlier.

Imagined result (would have):

I would have felt better in the morning.

Example 4.

Past action (problem):

I didn't call my friend on her birthday.

Better action (should have):

I should have called my friend.

Imagined result (would have):

She would have been happier.

Example 5.

Past action (problem):

I didn't bring an umbrella. It rained a lot.

Better action (should have):

I should have brought an umbrella.

Imagined result (would have):

I would have stayed dry.

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CONVERSATION - TALKING ABOUT "SHOULD HAVE" AND "WOULD HAVE"

Marta: Hey, Diego. You look upset. What happened?

Diego: I failed my driving test. I'm really disappointed. I should have practiced more.

Marta: Oh, I'm sorry. Yeah, you should have taken more lessons.

Diego: If I had practiced more, I would have passed the test. Now I have to take it again.

Marta: It's okay. Next time you'll do better. You shouldn't have waited until the last week.

Diego: You're right. I should have started earlier. If I had done that, I would have felt more confident.

Marta: At least now you know what to do. Next time, you will pass.

Diego: Yes, I will. Thanks for listening.

References:

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