

Would

Would /wʊd/ is an auxiliary - a modal auxiliary - which means it must always be used with a verb. We use it mainly to:

- a. talk about the past
- b. talk about the future in the past
- c. express the conditional mood
- d. other functions, such as:
 - expressing desire
 - polite requests and questions
 - an opinion or hope
 - a wish
 - presumption or expectation
 - uncertainty
 - negative comments
 - a regret

a. To talk about the past. Would for the past tense of will or going to:

"I thought it would rain, so I brought my umbrella."

Using it as a kind of past tense in reported speech:

"She said that she would buy some eggs." = "I will buy some eggs."

Past refusals:

"He wanted a divorce, but his wife would not agree."

Used rather like used to when talking about habitual past behaviour:

"Every summer we'd go to the seaside."

**b. The future in the past
i.e. something that
has not happened at
the time we are
talking about.**

"In London, she met the man that she would one day marry."

c. The conditionals.

2nd conditional:

"If he lost his job, he would have no money."

3rd conditional:

"If I had won the lottery, I would have bought a car."

Used with the 2nd conditional for advice:

"I wouldn't eat that if I were you."

Sometimes the condition is "understood" and there does not have to be an "if" clause:

"Someone who liked John would probably like John's father too." = If someone liked John, they would probably like John's father.

d. Other functions:

Desire or inclination:

"I'd love to live here".

Polite requests and questions:

“Would you open the door, please?” = politer than, “Open the door, please.”

An Opinion or hope:

“I would imagine that they'll buy a new one.”

A Wish:

“I wish you would stay.” = I really want you to stay.

Presumption or expectation:

“That would be Joe calling. I'll answer it.”

An Uncertainty:

“He would seem to be getting better.” = less certain than,

“He seems to be getting better.”

Negative comment:

“They would say that, wouldn't they?”

Regret (poetic):

“Would that it were true!” = If only it were true or, we wish that it were true!