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GRAMMAR

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April 10, 2023



I wish I hadn't... in Japanese | Using ～なければよかった **and** なきゃよかった

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HOW TO SAY
**I WISH I
HADN'T...**
in Japanese



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There are many ways to express regret "I wish I hadn't..." but in this lesson, we'll focus on two ways. Both ways mean the same thing, but one is informal (use with friends) and the other is

normal (use with anyone else).



食べなければよかった

I shouldn't have eaten. / I wish I had not eaten.



食べなきゃよかった

I shouldn't have eaten. / I wish I had not eaten.

These two forms are basically the same thing. なきゃ is a shortened version of なければ. However, as you probably can guess, なきゃ is more casual and therefore not suitable for saying around superiors or those older than you.

But both mean the same thing: *I wish I hadn't eaten...*

We will first go through the two forms starting with the standard one, but if you do better with examples rather than grammatical explanations, feel free to skip to the "Practice Speaking" section below.

～なければよかった I wish I hadn't

いみ
意味

MEANING

■ I wish I hadn't...; I shouldn't have...

- This shows regret for something done in the past.
- The **なければ** is the negative (from **ない**) and conditional **ければ**
- The **よかった** is the past affirmative form of **いい** (good). Together, it conveys the idea of "It would have been good if" or "it would have been better if..."

Remember, both **～なければよかった** and **～なきゃよかった** mean the same thing, but **なきゃよかった** is casual and should only be used among friends. Still, this is probably the most useful form since most conversation is among friends.

つか **かた** **使い方** **HOW TO USE**

Negative Conditional form of a verb + **よかった**

How to make the negative conditional form:

-る VERBS

- Drop the **-る** and add **-なければよかった**

To eat: **食べる** → **食べなければよかった** (I wish I had not eaten)

-う VERBS

- Change the final **-う** sound to the corresponding **-あ** sound, and add **-なければ**. In the following example, the word ends in "mu". Therefore it becomes "ma":

To drink: **飲む** → **飲まなければよかった** (I wish I had not drunk)

- Note, with verbs ending in **う** itself, change it to **わ**:

To buy: **買う** → **買わなければよかった** (I wish I had not bought)

IRREGULAR VERBS

- する (to do) → しなければよかった (I wish I had not done)
- くる (to come) → こなければよかった (I wish I had not come)

～**なきやよかった** I wish I hadn't (casual)

意味

MEANING

- I wish I hadn't...; I shouldn't have...
- This shows regret for something done in the past.
- The なきや is the casual negative (from ない) conditional
- The よかった is the past affirmative form of いい (good). Together, it conveys the idea of "It would have been good if" or "it would have been better if..."

Remember, both ～なければよかった and ～なきやよかった mean the same thing, but なきやよかった is casual and should only be used among friends. Still, this is probably the most useful form since most conversation is among friends.

使い方

HOW TO USE

Shortened Negative Conditional form of a verb + **よかった** (Casual form)

How to make the casual negative conditional form:

Basically, construct the verb as you would with **なければ** but replace the **ければ** with **きゃ**.

-る VERBS

- Drop the -る and add -なきゃ

To eat: 食べる → 食べなきゃよかった (I wish I had not eaten)

-う VERBS

- Change the final -う sound to the corresponding -あ sound, and add -なければ. In the following example, you change "mu" to "ma" (just as you did with the **～なければよかった**)

To drink: 飲む → 飲まなきゃよかった (I wish I had not drunk)

- Note, with verbs ending in う itself, change it to わ:

To buy: 買う → 買わなけきゃよかった (I wish I had not bought)

IRREGULAR VERBS

- する (to do) → しなければよかった (I wish I had not done)
- くる (to come) → こなければよかった (I wish I had not come)

Practice Speaking

While not as easy as the English "I wish I hadn't...", this form isn't too difficult. Even if you don't fully remember all the rules above, spend time repeating examples. With practice, it will become second nature to you.

Let's practice with a bunch of verbs in both formats. It's important to speak the words with or after the recording. This will train your mouth and ears to say the form correctly. If you are a Makoto+ member, be sure to use the Anki flashcard deck to practice more.



行かなければよかった

I wish I hadn't gone



行かなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't gone (casual)



食べなければよかった

I wish I hadn't eaten



食べなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't eaten (casual)



言わなければよかった

I wish I hadn't said that



言わなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't said that (casual)



読まなければよかった

I wish I hadn't read (it)



読まなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't read (it)



買わなければよかった

I wish I hadn't bought (it)



買まなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't bought (it)



飲まなければよかった

I wish I hadn't drunk (it)



飲まなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't drunk (it)



見なければよかった

I wish I hadn't seen (it)



見なきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't seen (it)



聞かなければよかった

I wish I hadn't heard (it)



聞かなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't heard (it)



書かなければよかった

I wish I hadn't written (it)



書かなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't written (it)



呼ばなければよかった

I wish I hadn't called (him/her)



呼ばなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't called (him/her)



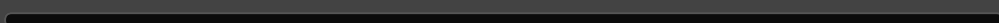
帰らなければよかった

I wish I hadn't returned (home)



帰らなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't returned (home)



0:00



会わなければよかった

I wish I hadn't met (him/her)

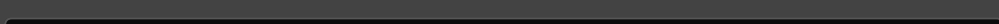


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会わなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't met (him/her)

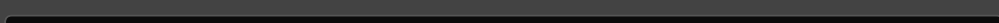


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しなればよかった

I wish I hadn't done (it) [from the irregular verb する]

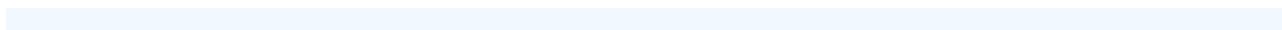


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しなきゃよかった

I wish I hadn't done (it) [from the irregular verb する]



COMMENTS

- The more you say these examples, the easier it will be to use these forms in conversation.

Shadow and repeat after the sound files as much as possible.

- If you are a Makoto+ member, [please click here for the Anki file and sound files for this lesson.](#)

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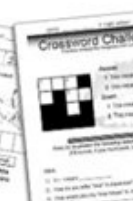
- If you need to practice the positive form "I wish I had..." [please click here for the full lesson with many examples with sound.](#)

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