

-(으)ㄴ들

even if, what good would it do

Concedes a supposition and then dismisses it as pointless. Almost always followed by a rhetorical question — the answer to which is no.

HOW TO ATTACH IT

Ends in a vowel	-ㄴ들	후회하다 → 후회한들
Ends in a consonant	-은들	많다 → 많은들
Ends in ㄹ	ㄹ drops	만들다 → 만든들
With a noun	인들	부자인들
Second clause	a rhetorical question	무슨 소용이 있겠는가
Neutral concession	-더라도	후회하더라도

WHEN TO USE IT

Vowel stems take -ㄴ들, consonant stems -은들, and stems in ㄹ drop it: 만들다 gives 만든들. With a noun the form is 인들: 부자인들.

The second clause is normally a rhetorical question — 무슨 소용이 있겠는가, 어찌하겠는가 — asserting that the supposition changes nothing.

Set against -더라도, which grants an extreme case and carries on, -(으)ㄴ들 grants it in order to declare it futile.

The register is literary and rhetorical — essays, speeches, proverbs. It has no place in ordinary conversation.

IN USE

- 이제 와서 후회한들 무슨 소용이 있겠는가.
What good is regret at this stage?
- 돈이 많은들 건강을 잃으면 무슨 의미가 있으랴.
What does wealth mean if you lose your health?
- 아무리 서두른들 이미 늦은 일이다.
However much we hurry, it is already too late.
- 부자인들 시간을 살 수는 없다.
Even a rich man cannot buy time.
- 지금 다시 만든들 예전 같지는 않을 것이다.
Even remade now, it would not be as before.
- 설명한들 그가 이해할 리 만무하다.
Even explaining it, there is no chance he would understand.

COMPARED WITH

-더라도

-더라도 grants an extreme case and continues; -(으)ㄴㄹ grants it in order to say it makes no difference.

힘들더라도 하세요. (do it anyway) / 후회한들 소용없다. (regret changes nothing)

-아/어 봤자

Same futility, opposite register. -아/어 봤자 is casual and dismissive; -(으)ㄴㄹ is literary and rhetorical.

해 봤자 소용없어요. (speech) / 한들 무슨 소용이 있겠는가. (essay)

-(으)ㄴ지언정

Both are literary concessives. -(으)ㄴㄹ concludes that nothing changes; -(으)ㄴ지언정 accepts a cost in order to hold firm.

후회한들 소용없다. (futile) / 굵을지언정 빌리지 않겠다. (resolute)

WATCH OUT

X 지금 다시 만들은들 예전 같지 않다.

O 지금 다시 만든들 예전 같지 않다.

Stems ending in ㄹ drop it before -(으)ㄴㄹ, as in 만든 음식 and 아는 사람.

X 후회한들 기분이 좋아졌다.

O 후회한들 무슨 소용이 있겠는가.

The second clause has to declare the supposition pointless, normally as a rhetorical question.

X 야, 지금 후회한들 뭐 하겠어.

O 야, 지금 후회해 봤자 소용없어.

-(으)ㄴㄹ is literary. In conversation, -아/어 봤자 carries the same meaning.