

하다못해

at the very least; if nothing else

Names the smallest thing that would have done — and points out that even that was missing. An adverb, written as one word.

HOW TO ATTACH IT

Word class	adverb, one word	하다못해 전화라도
Usually followed by	noun + (이)라도	전화라도
Reproach	… -았/었어야지	한 통 했어야지
Offering a fallback	… -(으)세요	이거라도 가져가세요
Origin	하다 못해	unable even to do
Spelling	joined as an adverb	하다못해, not 하다 못해

WHEN TO USE IT

It is an adverb, not an ending, and stands at the head of a clause. It is written as one word, though it comes from 하다 못해 — unable even to do.

What follows names a bare minimum, almost always with -(이)라도: 하다못해 전화라도 한 통 했어야지.

The point is that even that minimum was not met. The tone is reproachful, and the sentence often ends in -았/었어야지 or a rhetorical question.

A second, milder use offers a fallback: 하다못해 이거라도 가져가세요 — take this at least. Here it is generous rather than critical.

IN USE

- 1 하다못해 전화라도 한 통 했어야지요.
You might at least have telephoned.
- 2 하다못해 미안하다는 말 한마디는 있어야 하지 않나.
Surely there ought at least to have been a word of apology.
- 3 하다못해 이거라도 가져가세요.
Take this at least, if nothing else.
- 4 하다못해 자리라도 지켰더라면 좋았을 텐데.
If he had at least stayed at his post, it would have been something.
- 5 하다못해 부품 하나라도 직접 만들어 봤어야지요.
You should at least have made a single part yourself.

6 하다못해 인사만이라도 하고 갔으면 좋았을 것을.

If only he had at least said goodbye before going.

COMPARED WITH

(이)라도

They work together. (이)라도 marks the second-best option; 하다못해 announces that you are about to name the very least of them.

전화라도 하세요. (do call, at least) / 하다못해 전화라도 했어야지. (even that was too much?)

-다 못해

The construction it came from. -다 못해 says something passed its limit; 하다못해 has frozen into an adverb with its own meaning.

참다못해 소리쳤다. (couldn't bear it) / 하다못해 전화라도. (at the very least)

조차

조차 marks even the expected thing as absent; 하다못해 names the minimum that should have sufficed. Both point at a floor.

인사조차 없었다. (not even a greeting) / 하다못해 인사라도 했어야지. (at least a greeting)

WATCH OUT

X 하다 못해 전화라도 했어야지.

O 하다못해 전화라도 했어야지.

As an adverb it is written as one word. The spaced 하다 못해 is the separate "unable even to do" construction.

X 하다못해 최고급 선물을 준비했어야지.

O 하다못해 작은 선물이라도 준비했어야지.

What follows must be a bare minimum. Naming something lavish contradicts the word.

X 하다못해 전화를 했어야지.

O 하다못해 전화라도 했어야지.

The (이)라도 is what marks the thing as the least acceptable option, and is expected here.