

-느니만 못하다

worse than not doing it at all

Judges an action to fall below the alternative of doing nothing. Built on -느니, and a favourite in proverbs and stern advice.

HOW TO ATTACH IT

Verb	-느니만 못하다	하다 → 하느니만 못하다
Ends in ㄹ	ㄹ drops	만들다 → 만드느니만 못하다
Commonest frame	안 -느니만 못하다	안 하느니만 못하다
What is judged	the subject before it	어설피게 하는 것은 ...
Never takes tense	plain stem only	했느니만 못하다 is wrong
Spoken version	안 하는 게 낫다	그냥 안 하는 게 나아요

WHEN TO USE IT

Attach -느니만 못하다 to a verb stem; ㄹ drops, giving 만드느니만 못하다. No tense goes in front.

The structure sets a subject against a standard: 어설피게 하는 것은 안 하느니만 못하다 — doing it badly is worse than not doing it. What comes before is judged inferior to what follows.

The commonest frame is 안 -느니만 못하다, comparing against inaction. That is where the phrase gets its bite.

It is written and sententious. In speech, 안 하는 게 낫다 says the same thing plainly.

IN USE

- 어설피게 하는 것은 안 하느니만 못하다.
Doing it half-well is worse than not doing it at all.
- 성의 없는 선물은 주지 않느니만 못합니다.
A gift given without care is worse than no gift.
- 잘못된 정보는 모르느니만 못하다.
Wrong information is worse than none.
- 억지로 하는 사과는 하지 않느니만 못해요.
An apology forced out is worse than no apology.
- 급하게 만드는 것은 아예 만들지 않느니만 못합니다.
Making it in a rush is worse than not making it at all.
- 불편한 침묵은 말을 꺼내느니만 못했다.
The awkward silence was worse than speaking would have been.

COMPARED WITH

-느니

-느니 picks the lesser of two evils; -느니만 못하다 delivers a verdict on which is worse. Same root, different move.

기다리느니 걸겠다. (I'd sooner walk) / 안 하느니만 못하다. (worse than nothing)

-는 게 낫다

Same judgement, opposite framing. -는 게 낫다 names the better option; -느니만 못하다 condemns the worse one.

안 하는 게 나아요. (better not to) / 안 하느니만 못하다. (worse than not doing)

-만 못하다

With a noun, 만 못하다 simply compares: 작년만 못하다, 예전만 못하다. -느니만 못하다 is that pattern applied to a clause.

작년만 못해요. (not as good as last year) / 안 하느니만 못해요. (worse than not doing)

WATCH OUT

X 대충 만들느니만 못한 결과가 나왔다.

O 대충 만드느니만 못한 결과가 나왔다.

Stems ending in in $\Rightarrow$ drop it before -느니, as they do before -는 and -나.

X 어설프게 했느니만 못하다.

O 어설프게 하는 것은 안 하느니만 못하다.

-느니 never carries tense, and the sentence needs a subject to be judged against the standard.

X 야, 그거 안 하느니만 못해.

O 야, 그거 그냥 안 하는 게 나아.

The phrase is sententious and written. In casual speech it sounds like quoting a proverb.