

Grammar

5a

First and Second Conditionals

Conditional clauses begin with *if* (or a word such as *when* which means the same as *if*) and follow basic patterns (see also 5b). This Section deals with patterns which form the First, Second and Zero Conditionals:

First Conditionals

We use First Conditionals to talk about events which are possible. The Conditional clause can refer to the present or the future.

Conditional clause main clause

if + Present Simple – *will* + bare infinitive

If it rains, *we will stay at home.*

• The Conditional clause can come before or after the main clause. We use a comma at the end of the Conditional clause when it comes first.

If you don't try harder, you will fail.

You will fail if you don't try harder.

• Other structures are possible, depending on what you want to say:

Conditional clause main clause

if + Present Simple – modal verb

If you behave yourself, *you can come.*

if + Present Simple – *be* going to (future)

If you don't work, *you're going to fail.*

if + Present Simple – imperative

If you need anything, *ask.*

if + Present Continuous – *will* + bare infinitive

If we're leaving soon, *I'll get my coat.*

if + Present Perfect – *will* + bare infinitive.

If I've finished, *I'll be able to come.*

if + Present Perfect – modal verb

If you've finished, *you can go out.*

Imperative – *and/or* + *will*

Eat less *and you'll get slim.*

Second Conditional

We use the Second Conditional for unlikely situations in the present or future:

Conditional clause main clause

if + Past Simple – *would*

If I had enough money, *I'd retire.*

• Instead of *would* we can use other modal verbs: *If I lost my job, I might go abroad for a while.*

• Compare First and Second Conditionals:

If I lose my job, I'll find life very difficult.

(= there is a possibility – First Conditional)

If I lost my job, I'd find life very difficult.

(= there is no evidence – Second Conditional)

Zero Conditional

We use the Zero Conditional to show that one action, result, etc. always follows another. We often use *when* for *if*:

Conditional clause

main clause

Present Simple

Present Simple

If/When water freezes,

it turns to ice.

When I travel by boat,

I'm always sick.

(just) in case

This means 'because it is possible that...' and usually comes after the main clause (see page 97)

Paul will bring you a sweater in case it gets cold.

provided (that) as long as

These phrases suggest that there is one vital condition (see also page 97):

Provided you rest, you'll make a full recovery.

unless

We can use *unless* to replace *if...not* in Conditionals (see also page 97). After *unless*, we use a Present tense to talk about the future:

Unless you leave now, you will be late.

You will be late unless you go now.

Practice

1 Complete the sentences using these words and phrases.

was leaving can't might starts am would be becomes take should

- 1 If I not busy, I'll visit you.
- 2 If he careful, he wouldn't break things.
- 3 If he were slimmer, he much more attractive.
- 4 If she Prime Minister, she'll raise taxes.
- 5 Unless you stop wasting time, I'm right now.

2 Write two sentences using the information. The first should express a *likely* event and the second a *less likely* but still possible event.

Example: we leave at eight / we arrive on time

likely: If we leave at eight o'clock,

we'll arrive on time.

less likely: If we left at eight o'clock,

we'd arrive on time.

3 Complete the second sentence so that it is as similar in meaning as possible to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given.

Example: Her job is tiring because she doesn't have a secretary. *not*

If she had a secretary, her job would

not be so tiring.

- 1 am not busy / come and pick you up
likely:
less likely:
- 2 you fall / break your leg
likely:
less likely:
- 3 I drink too much wine / I feel sleepy
likely:
less likely:
- 4 you get the job / you have more freedom
likely:
less likely:
- 5 the questions be easy enough / everyone pass the test
likely:
less likely:
- 6 If you don't give me more information, I help you.
- 7 If a fire the alarm goes off.
- 8 You make your own food if you don't like my cooking.
- 9 more exercise and you'll soon feel better.
- 10 If the weather improves, I go for a stroll.

- 1 Give us your vote and we promise to make this country great again. *long*
We'll make this country great again
..... us your vote.
- 2 There will be no more unemployment, if we win the elections. *jobs*
If we come to power,
..... for everybody.
- 3 We will build more schools if we can afford to. *enough*
Provided, we will build more schools.
- 4 They won't let you into the theatre without a ticket. *unless*
You can't get into the theatre a ticket.
- 5 Bring your sun lotion because a heatwave is possible. *case*
Bring your sun lotion a heatwave.

5b Third Conditional

We use the Third Conditional to talk about an event or situation that did not happen in the past:

Conditional clause **main clause**
 if + Past Perfect – would + Perfect
If Bruce had asked me, I would have said 'yes'.

~~X If I wouldn't have become a teacher, I would like to be an actor.~~
 ✓ *If I had not become a teacher, I would have liked to be an actor.*

• Notice how we can make either clause negative, with changes in the meaning:
If I had taken an umbrella, I wouldn't have got wet. (= but I did get wet)
If I hadn't taken an umbrella, I would have got wet. (= but I didn't get wet)

• Both clauses can be negative:
They wouldn't have missed their plane if they hadn't woken up late. (= but they did wake up late, and they did miss their plane)

• Instead of *would*, we can use *could* or *might* modal verbs in the main clause:
If you'd asked, I could've told you the answer.
I might have gone to the party if I had known about it.

• We often use *if only* meaning 'I wish very strongly' (see 5c):
If only he had asked, I'd have helped him.

Mixed Conditionals

Sometimes we make sentences which mix Second and Third Conditionals, especially when a past event has an effect in the present:
If you hadn't invited me, I wouldn't have gone to the party. (= I did go to the party – Third conditional)
If you hadn't invited me, I wouldn't be here now. (= I'm at the party now – Third + Second Conditionals)

1 Complete these sentences to make appropriate Third Conditional or Mixed Conditional sentences, using the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

Example: If you (come) to the theatre yesterday, you (enjoy) the play.

If you *had come* to the theatre with me yesterday, you *would have enjoyed* the play.

- If I (visit) Athens last year, I (phone) you.
- If only I (know) you already had tickets, I (not get) any for you.
- If you (start) coming to the course earlier, you (could pass) the exam.
- If I (not be) so shy at the party last Saturday, I (might make) more friends.
- If you (not spend) so much money, I (not be) angry now.
- I (could become) an accountant if I (be) good at maths.
- She (get) promoted last year if she (not argue) with the boss.
- He (not get) the job, if he (not wear) a tie.
- If I (meet) you before, my life (be) different.
- If he (not see) the other car, there (be) a serious accident.

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2 Make Third Conditional sentences for each of the following situations. Begin with the words given.

Example: I was tired. I went to bed early.

If I hadn't felt tired, I wouldn't have gone to bed early or:
 If I hadn't felt tired, I would have gone to bed later.

- I didn't have enough money. I didn't take a taxi.
 If
 I wasn't interested in the film. I didn't go to the cinema.
 If
 We took the wrong turning. We arrived late.
 If
 Romeo thought Juliet was dead. He committed suicide.
 If
 Oliver was punished. He asked for more food.
 If Oliver
 The building had weak foundations. It fell down.
 I didn't go downstairs. I was afraid of the dark.
 I might
 You didn't run fast. You didn't come first.
 You could
 I didn't know she was the examiner. I made a silly joke.
 Had
 She didn't have a car. She couldn't have driven there.
 If she

3 Fill each space in the following text with one suitable word.

All the difference

I often wonder how my life would have the most minute details: a split-second particular day I (1) different if on that decision which makes all the difference. the other direction. Or what (2) walked in (3) all (9) I ever have found romance at have happened if - in those few seconds - that day and if she (10) I hadn't met Francesca (11) decided I (4) walked just a little bit (5) been (6) I couldn't possibly (12) done faster? She wouldn't (7) here now - I would probably shining and the birds singing, she would (8) in the same city I grew up (13) not met on that bright, sunny morning. in. It is amazing how our lives depend on (14) And if the sun had not (15) even spoken to me.

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