**F. Conditional Sentences**

**A. Conditional sentences with “if”**

In any conditional sentence we can distinguish between the *main* clause and the *subordinate* clause. In the following sentence the main clause is "I'll help you", and the subordinate clause is "if you need me":

*I'll help you, if you need me*.

As the order of the sentences is not important, we can also say:

*If you need me, I'll help you.*

What we need to know is the tense in each clause. The tenses used depend on the meaning expressed. We can distinguish four types of conditional sentences.

**0**. **To talk about general truths**

*If I have a big lunch, it makes me sleepy*.

We use the present tense in both clauses.

**1. To express an open future**

*If it rains, we'll go to the cinema.*

We use the present tense in the subordinate clause and a tense with future reference in the main clause. But we can also use the imperative in the main clause:

*If you see her, give her my message, please*.

**2a. To express an unreal present**

*If I had money, I would travel around the world.*

**2b. To express an unlikely future**

*If I won the lottery, I would travel around the world.*

Both in 2a and 2b we use the past tense in the subordinate clause and the conditional tense in the main clause. Notice that "would" can be contracted to "**’d**" and that instead of "**would**" we can use "**could**" to indicate conditional ability and "**might**" to indicate possibility.

**3. To express an unreal past**

*If you had seen the film, you would have enjoyed it.*

We use the Past Perfect in the subordinate clause and the Conditional Perfect in the main clause. It is also possible to use "could" or "might" instead of "would".

This classification is simplified: actual usage is more complex. An exception is the mixture of types 2a and 3, in which an unreal past can imply an unreal present and *viceversa*.

*If I had taken his advice, I would be a rich man.*

*If he weren't so proud, he could have asked for help.*

**The tense agreement rules can be summarized as follows:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **1.** | **If + Present → Future / Present**  If it rains, I will take my umbrella.  If it rains, I take my umbrella. |
| **2.** | **If + Simple Past → *Would* + infinitive**  If it rained, I would take my umbrella. |
| **3.** | **If + Present Perfect → *Would* + perfect infinitive**  If it had rained, I would have taken my umbrella. |

**B. Other subordinating conjunctions**

Apart from "if" there are a number of other subordinating conjunctions used in conditional clauses:

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| ***unless*** |
| ***in case*** |
| ***provided (that)*** |
| ***providing (that)*** |
| ***so/as long as*** |

**C. Modal uses of the past tense with several expressions**

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| --- |
| ***I wish…***  ***If only …***  ***…’d rather…*** |

**In type 2 conditionals**, the past tense does not refer to past time, but to an unreal present or unlikely future. This use of the past tense is called a *modal use* and there are a number of other contexts in which it is found.

* + - After the expressions "**I wish**..." and "**If only**...":

(a) we use the **Simple Past** tense to express **regret** about the **present** (to say that we would like something to be different):

*I wish I had a car.*

*If only I were more intelligent!*

(b) we use the **Past Perfect** tense to express **regret** that something happened or did not happen in the **past**.

*I feel sick. I wish I hadn't eaten so much.*

*If only you had explained the situation to me!*

* + - After the expression "**it's time**...", we use the past tense when we think that someone should have already done something.

*It is late. It is time we left.*

We use the past here but the meaning is present or future, not past.

With this expression, we can also use an infinitive and if we wish to make explicit reference to the subject of the infinitive, we can introduce it with "for":

*It is time (for us) to leave.*

* + - After the expression "…**’d rather**..." (“would rather”), the past tense is generally used, but the meaning is present or future, as mentioned for the above expressions. “Would rather” is used in this case to say that one person would prefer another to do something.

*I’d rather you did the housework today.*

*I’d rather we hadn’t got rid of our old printer.*

* + - **Subject-Verb inversion** with a conditional meaning

Each of the three types of conditional sentences can be rewritten without using a conditional conjunction by means of inversion.

**For the first conditionals we have to use the modal verb "should":**

*If you find the answer, please let me know.*

*Should you find the answer, please let me know.*

*Should his plane arrive after 11, tell him he will have to take a taxi.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 1st conditional | **Should** + subject + verb …, main clause |

**For the second conditionals we have to use the past of the "be to" construction:**

*If they offered you the post, would you accept it?*

*Were they* ***TO*** *offer you the post, would you accept it?*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 2nd conditional | **Were** + subject + **TO** + infinitive …, main clause |

**For the third conditionals we simply omit the "if" and invert the subject with the auxiliary "had":**

*If he had been careful, he wouldn't have broken the glass.*

*Had he been careful, he wouldn't have broken the glass.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 3rd conditional | **Had** + subject + verb … , main clause |

**B. Practice**

**1. Fill in the correct form of the verb in brackets.**

1. If I had known the answer, I **would not phone** (not phone) for help.

2. I'll tell you the answer if you **promise** (promise) to keep it secret.

3. He **would had been** (be) less nervous in the interview if he had slept the previous night.

4. **Would you buy** (you buy) the house if you had enough money?

5. I wish we **had not wasted** (not waste) so much time yesterday.

6. I **will not leave** (not leave) unless there is no other option.

7. It really is time we **went** (go) to bed.

8. What **would you have done** (you do) yesterday if you had been alone?

9. If we **had taken** (take) the necessary precautions beforehand, none of this would have happened.

10. Don't say anything unless he **mentions** (mention) the subject.

11. If she had had any problems, she **would have already phoned** (already phone).

12. If only I **did not have** (not have) to work so much, I could go out more.

**2. Fill in the blanks with an appropriate conditional conjunction other than “if”.**

1. I won't wait here **unless** you promise to come back.

2. There will not be any problem **providing** you don't make much noise.

3. I'll take a sandwich **in case** I get hungry.

4. You can go with your friends **provided that** you are allowed by your father.

5. I will not finish today **unless** you leave me alone.

**3. In the following exercise you have to rewrite the conditional sentences using inversion.**

1. If I resigned, would you do the same?

Were **I resigned, would you do the same?**

2. If you see John, tell him the news.

Should **you see John, tell him news**

3. If they offered you a rise, would you stay with the firm?

Were **they to offer you a rise, …**

4. Phone me if there are any problems.

Should **there be any problem, phone me**

5. If I had understood the problem, I wouldn't have asked you.

Had I **understand the problem, I would not ….**

**4. In the following exercise you have to decide whether the sentences are right or wrong. If they are wrong you must correct them**.

1. I won't do the work unless she pays me. (correct)

2. If you had an accident, phone a doctor.(

3. If I had listened carefully, I would had (**have**) understood everything.

4. If you went (**had gone**) to Paris you **would have met** Ann.

5. Would you follow me if I left this town? (correct)

6. Should there been (**be**) any difficulty, don't hesitate to get in touch.

7. Had you told me, I might **have** be**en** able to help you.

**5. Fill in the appropriate form of the verb in brackets.**

1. I wish you **weren’t** (not be) so selfish.

2. If only you **asked** (ask) me instead of deciding by yourself.

3. I wish I **had** (have) a lot of money.

4. It really is time you **finished** (finish) your homework.

5. If only he had **checked** (check) the answers, he might have corrected the mistakes.

**6. Rewrite the following sentences with the new beginnings without changing their meaning.**

1. It was late so we took a taxi home.

**If it hadn’t been late, we wouldn’t took a taxi home**

# 2. If I studied a lot, I would pass the exam!

**Were I to study a lot, I would pass the exam!**

# 3. As I am tired, I can't do the work.

**If I was not tired, I could do the work**

# 4. If you hear any news, let me know.

**Should you hear any news, let me know.**

# 5. It's a shame that I don't have more time to study.

**I wish I had more time to study.**

# 6. He didn't get the job because he gave a bad impression in the interview.

**If he hasn’t given a bad impression, he would have got the job**

# 7. I won't do anything unless you ring.

**If you don’t ring I won’t do anything.**

# 8. We wouldn't have acted like that if we had understood the situation better.

**Had we understood the situations better, we wouldn’t have acted like that.**

# 9. He was talking on the phone so I couldn't tell him the news.

# **If he hadn’t been talking on the phone, I could have told him the news.**

# 10. I have too much work so I won't go to the match this Saturday.

# **If I didn’t have too much work, I would go to the match.**