

GRAMMAR

Using the third conditional

LEVEL

Intermediate (B1)

NUMBER

EN_B1_3122G

LANGUAGE

English



Learning outcomes

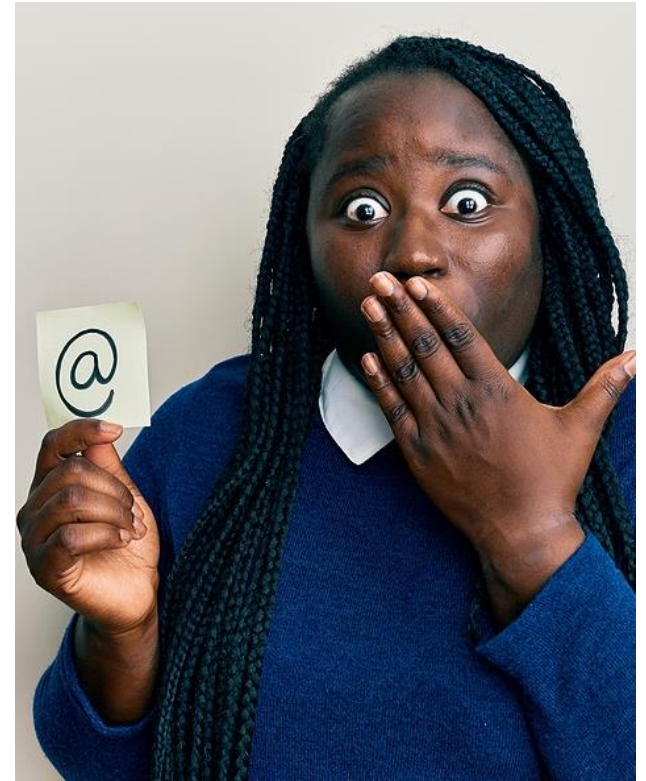
- I can form the third conditional and accurately use it in a sentence.
- I can describe the imagined results of a past action using the third conditional.

Warm-up

1. **Look at** the photo on the right.
2. **Discuss** the questions below.

**Who is she?
What might she
have done?**

Hint: If we 'cc:' someone into an email, what does that refer to?



Reading

Read the forum posts below. **Explain** each mistake in your own words.

What was your biggest mistake at work ever?



@kim89

I used to work for a major PR company. It was my first day on the job and one of my tasks was to send out a promotional email to a mailing list of 1,000 journalists. I forgot to “bcc:” everyone; instead, I just “cc:”d them in. 90% of the mailing list unsubscribed straight afterwards. If I had selected the BCC: option instead, I wouldn’t have lost the company 900 important contacts in a single day...



@jen92

When I was in my early 20s, I worked for a start-up. Our team was more like a group of friends than colleagues! One day, my boss and I were joking around and I almost let it slip that I thought I had no ability to do my job. Luckily, a colleague of mine, Sarah, overheard and came over to stop me before it was too late. If she hadn’t done that, I guarantee I would have told him all my secrets!

Exploring the third conditional

1. **Read** the example below.
2. **Answer** the questions in the blue boxes.

If I had selected the bcc option, I wouldn't have lost the company 900 important contacts in a single day.

- Did **@kim89** select the BCC: button when sending her email?
- Did she lose the company 900 contacts?

- Is this sentence talking about the past, the present or the future?
- Is she talking about a real or unreal (=imaginary) situation?

Understanding the third conditional

1. **Read** through the **grammar explanation** below.
2. **Ask** your teacher to clarify any doubts.

If I had selected the bcc option, I wouldn't have lost the company 900 important contacts in a single day.

- We use the **third conditional** to talk about **imagined past events** and their consequences.
- The person is thinking about **an event in the past** and imagining **the result *if* something else **had** happened.**

In @kim89's situation:

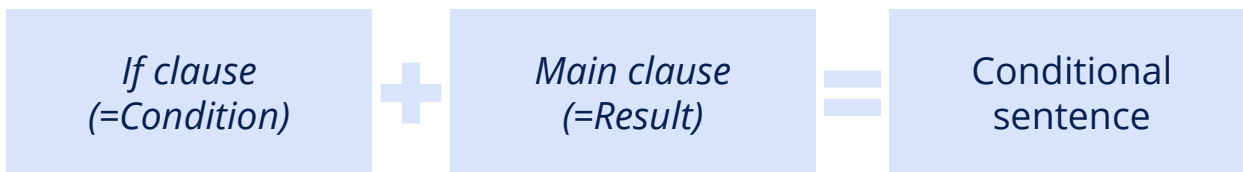
- **Unreal or imaginary past:**
She selected BCC: and didn't lose any important contacts.
- **Real past:**
She selected CC: and lost 900 important contacts.

Forming the third conditional

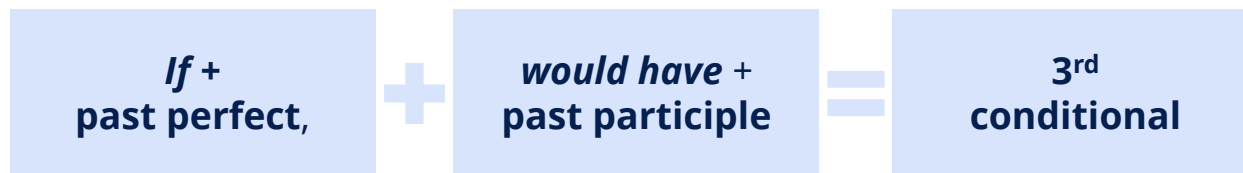
1. **Identify** the *if clause* and the *main clause* in the example.
2. **Identify** the verb forms in the formula in each clause.

If I had selected the bcc option, I wouldn't have lost the company 900 important contacts in a single day.

Forming a conditional sentence



Forming the third conditional



Form third conditional sentences



*If + past perfect, would
have + past participle*

Fill in the gaps to form a correct sentence.

- 1 If we _____ (*tell*) the client the truth, we _____ (*feel, not*) so guilty for lying!
- 2 If I _____ (*send*) you the report on time, you _____ (*be, not*) so stressed all afternoon.
- 3 If my friend _____ (*want*) some advice from you, she _____ (*mention*) it yesterday when we went for lunch.
- 4 If we _____ (*know*) that the event was next week, we _____ (*drive, not*) all the way here for it this morning!
- 5 If they _____ (*give*) us an exact time for the delivery, we _____ (*miss, not*) it!



Write third conditional sentences

(Optional: **Compare** your sentences with a partner in breakout rooms.)

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | I didn't win the prize because I made a stupid mistake. | > | If I hadn't made a stupid mistake, I would have won the competition. |
| 2 | He went to live in Spain. While he was there, he met his wife. | > | |
| 3 | Our car broke down so we didn't get to the meeting on time. | > | |
| 4 | She missed the event because she forgot to buy a ticket. | > | |
| 5 | You didn't follow the map, so you got lost. | > | |
| 6 | You helped me yesterday. That's why I managed to finish the project. | > | |

Uses of the third conditional

1. **Read through** the box on the left. 2. **Answer** the questions on the right.

If I had selected the BCC: option, I wouldn't have lost the company 900 important contacts in a single day.

If Sarah hadn't stopped me, I would have told my boss all my secrets!

- Remember, we use the third conditional:
- When we imagine a different result for a past action or event.

- Which sentence **expresses a regret** about something in the past?
- Which sentence **expresses relief** about avoiding a past problem?



If I'd selected the BCC:
option,...



Native speakers often shorten **had** to **'d**.
Practise pronouncing this with your teacher.



I almost **let it slip** that I felt
I had no ability to do my
job!



Did **@jen92** intend to tell her boss about her
feelings or not?



Free practice

“Think of a situation in your life where something would have turned out differently if you had done something else.”

Take a few moments to think of your example.

Explain your situation to the rest of the group.

Try to use one sentence using a **third conditional**.





End of the lesson

Idiom

to be hung up on something

Meaning: to be very worried about somebody or something.

Example: Valentina is so hung up on the past. She never lives in the moment!



Additional practice



Match the sentences

Create examples of **third conditional** sentences by matching the beginnings and endings.

1 If I hadn't studied marketing,

2 If Julio hadn't put his phone on speaker,

3 My boss wouldn't have got angry

4 My team would have met the deadline

5 If I had attended the training session,

a his colleagues wouldn't have overheard his conversation.

b if I had delegated tasks better.

c I would have known how to use the software.

d if I had told her I was going to be late for the meeting.

e I would have studied business management instead.



Fill in the gaps

Use the verbs in brackets to **complete** the questions. The first one has been done for you as an example.

- 1 If you _____ (have) unlimited holiday time last year, where _____ (go)?
*If you **had had** unlimited holiday time last year, where **would you have gone**?*
- 2 If you _____ (have) a completely free day yesterday, what _____ (do)?
- 3 What _____ (buy) if you _____ (find) 200 euros in your pocket last Saturday?
- 4 If your boss _____ (ask) you to work until 2 am last Sunday, what _____ (say)?
- 5 If you _____ (be) born in the UK, how would your life _____ (be) different?



About you

Work with a partner and **choose two questions** from the previous slide to ask them. Swap roles and answer questions when you're done.



If I had had unlimited holiday time last year, I would have gone to New Zealand.

I would have bought a ticket for a football match if I had found 200 euros last weekend.

If I had been born in the UK, I would have spoken English as a child.



What went wrong?

Use the examples below to help you structure your answer. Try to **give** some **more detail**.

Think of one thing that you could have done better at work last week. Tell your classmates.

If I hadn't wasted time on online shopping, I would have been better prepared for the meeting.

If I had listened to my manager's instructions, I would have written the report well the first time.

If we hadn't gone out the night before, my colleagues and I would have felt better on Friday morning.





Answer key

- P. 5:** No, she didn't select the BCC option; She did lose the company 900 contacts; The sentence is talking about the past; She's talking about an unreal or imaginary situation.
- P. 7:** **If clause:** *If I had selected the BCC: option;*
Main clause: *I wouldn't have lost the company.. in a single day.*
Past perfect: *had selected*
Past participle: *lost*
- P. 8:** 1. had told, wouldn't have felt, 2. had sent, wouldn't have been, 3. had wanted, would have mentioned, 4. had known, wouldn't have driven, 5. had given, wouldn't have missed.
- P. 9:** **Suggested answers:**
2. If he hadn't moved to Spain, he wouldn't have met his wife.
3. If our car hadn't broken down, we would have got to the meeting on time.
4. If she had remembered to buy a ticket, she wouldn't have missed the event.
5. If you had followed the map, you wouldn't have got lost!
6. If you hadn't helped me yesterday, I wouldn't have finished the project.



Answer key

P. 10: Regret: *If I had selected the BCC option...*

Relief: *If Sarah hadn't stopped me...*

P. 17: 1e, 2a, 3d, 4b, 5c

P. 18: 2. had had – would you have done, 3. would you have bought, had found, 4. had asked, would you have said, 5. had been, have been



Summary

When to use the **third conditional**:

- We use the **third conditional** to talk about **imagined past events** and their consequences.
- The person is thinking about **an event in the past** and imagining it **with a different result**.

How to **form** the **third conditional**:

- **If + past perfect, + would have + past participle**
- If I hadn't bought that red dress, I would have bought the blue one instead.

Using the **third conditional**:

- We often use this form to express **regrets** or **relief** about the **past**
- **Regret**: If I had selected the BCC: option, I wouldn't have lost the company 900 important contacts in a single day.
- **Relief**: If Sarah hadn't stopped me, I would have told my boss all my secrets!



Vocabulary

to let it slip

unreal past

imaginary past

regret

relief

