

Grammar Reference

Second conditional

We use the **second conditional** in English when we want to talk about **unreal** situations or **things we don't think will happen**. We use it to talk about the **possible results** of these situations. It is made like this:

if + past simple, ... would + infinitive

Here are some examples:

If we all recycled more, there would be a lot less waste in the world.

If I lived by the sea, I'd go swimming every day.

A conditional sentence has **two parts**. The **if** part tells us about the **unreal** or **unlikely situation**. The **would** part tells us the **possible results** of this situation.

If I lived by the sea, ... (This is the imaginary situation.)

... I'd go swimming every day. (This is the result of the imaginary situation.)

The two parts can come in any order. When the **if** part comes first in the sentence, we put a comma between the **if** part and the **would** part. You don't use a comma when the **would** part comes first.

If I had more free time, I would be more relaxed.

I would be more relaxed if I had more free time.

We use the **past simple** in the **if** part – but **second conditional** sentences aren't about the past. We use the **past form** to show that the situation isn't real. The **would** part tells us the result of this imaginary situation.

We sometimes use **were** instead of **was** in the **if** part of a second conditional sentence. It means the same, but when we use **were**, the sentence sounds more **formal**.

If it were time to leave, I'd go.

We'd have lunch outside if it weren't raining.