

Conditionals: if I do ... and if I did ...

A

Compare these examples:

- (1) LISA: Shall we take the bus or the train?
JESS: **If we take** the bus, it **will** be cheaper.

For Jess, it is possible that they will take the bus, so she says:

If we take the bus, it **will** be ...



- (2) Lisa and Jess decide to take the train. Later, Jess talks to Joe.

JOE: How are you going to travel?

JESS: We're going to take the train. **If we took** the bus, it **would** be cheaper, but the train is quicker.

Now Jess knows they are *not* going to take the bus, so she says:

If we took the bus, it **would** be ...

If we took the bus, it would be cheaper.

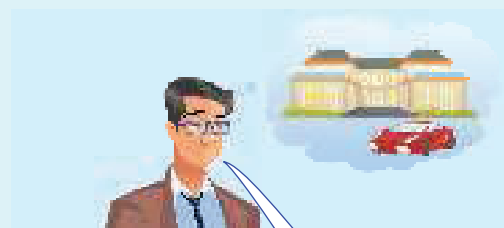


B

When we talk about something that will not happen, or we don't expect that it will happen, we use **if + past (if we went / if there was etc.)**.

But the meaning is *not* past:

- ☐ What would you do **if you won** a lot of money? (I don't really expect this to happen)
- ☐ **If there was** an election tomorrow, who would you vote for? (there will not be an election tomorrow)
- ☐ I'd be surprised **if they didn't come** to the party. (I expect them to come)



If I won a lot of money ...

Compare **if I find** and **if I found**:

- ☐ I think I left my watch at your house. **If you find** it, can you call me?
- but
- ☐ **If you found** a wallet in the street, what would you do with it?

C

We do not normally use **would** in the **if**-part of the sentence:

- ☐ I'd be very scared **if somebody pointed** a gun at me. (*not* if somebody would point)
- ☐ **If we went** by bus, it would be cheaper. (*not* If we would go)

In the other part of the sentence (not the **if**-part) we use **would ('d) / wouldn't**:

- ☐ I'd be (= I **would** be) scared if somebody pointed a gun at me.
- ☐ I'm not going to bed yet. I'm not tired. If I went to bed now, I **wouldn't sleep**.
- ☐ What **would** you **do** if you were bitten by a snake?

Could and **might** are also possible:

- ☐ If I won a lot of money, I **might** buy a house. (= it is possible that I would buy a house)
- ☐ If it stopped raining, we **could go** out. (= we would be able to go out)

Exercises

1 Complete the sentences. Choose from:

did dropped found happened lost was went

- 1 If you found a wallet in the street, what would you do with it?
- 2 Be careful with that vase. If you it, it would break into small pieces.
- 3 This notebook is very important to me. I'd be very upset if I it.
- 4 I don't expect to lose my job but if that, I'd have to find another one.
- 5 We're thinking about our holiday for next year. If we to Italy, would you come with us?
- 6 I don't think he'll fail the exam. I'd be very surprised if he
- 7 If there a fire in the building, would you know how to put the fire out?

2 What do you say in these situations?

- 1 Of course you don't expect to win the lottery. Which do you say?
 - a If I win the lottery, I'll buy a big house. ☐
 - b If I won the lottery, I'd buy a big house. ☒ (b is correct)
- 2 You're not going to sell your car because it's old and not worth much. Which do you say?
 - a If I sell my car, I won't get much money for it. ☐
 - b If I sold my car, I wouldn't get much money for it. ☐
- 3 You often see Sarah. A friend of yours wants to contact her. Which do you say?
 - a If I see Sarah, I'll tell her to call you. ☐
 - b If I saw Sarah, I'd tell her to call you. ☐
- 4 You don't expect that there will be a fire in the building. Which do you say?
 - a What will you do if there is a fire in the building? ☐
 - b What would you do if there was a fire in the building? ☐
- 5 You've never lost your passport. You can only imagine it.
 - a I don't know what I'll do if I lose my passport. ☐
 - b I don't know what I'd do if I lost my passport. ☐
- 6 Somebody stops you and asks the way to a bank. Which do you say?
 - a If you go right at the end of this street, you'll see a bank on your left. ☐
 - b If you went right at the end of this street, you'd see a bank on your left. ☐
- 7 You're in a lift. There is an emergency button. Nobody is going to press it. Which do you say?
 - a What will happen if somebody presses that button? ☐
 - b What would happen if somebody pressed that button? ☐

3 Complete the sentences.

- 1 I'd be very scared if somebody pointed (somebody / point) a gun at me.
- 2 I can't afford to buy a car. If (I / buy) a car, I'd have to borrow the money.
- 3 If you had a party, who (you / invite)?
- 4 Don't lend James your car. If (he / ask) me, I wouldn't lend him mine.
- 5 I don't think Gary and Emma will get married. (I / be) amazed if they did.
- 6 If (somebody / give) me \$20,000, (I / have) a long holiday.
- 7 (you / be) nervous if (you / meet) a famous person?
- 8 What (you / do) if (you / be) in a lift
.....and..... (it / stop) between floors?

4 Write sentences beginning If ...

- 1 We're not going to take the 10.30 train. (we / arrive too early)
If we took the 10.30 train, we'd arrive too early.
- 2 We're not going to stay at a hotel. (it / cost too much)
If we, it
- 3 There's no point in telling you what happened. (you / not / believe)
If I
- 4 Sally has no plans to leave her job. (it / hard to find another one)
If she
- 5 Kevin is not going to apply for the job. (he / not / get it).
.....

Conditional 2: if I knew ... I wish I knew ...

A Study this example situation:

Sarah wants to phone Paul, but she can't do this because she doesn't know his number. She says:

I'd phone him **if I knew** his number.
(I'd phone = I **would** phone)

Sarah *doesn't* know Paul's number, so she says 'if I **knew**'.
She *imagines* what she **would** do **if** she **knew** his number.



... if I knew his number ...

When we imagine a situation like this, we use **if + past** (**if I knew** / **if you were** / **if we didn't** etc.).
But the meaning is present, *not* past:

- ☐ There are many things I'd like to do **if I had** more time. (but I don't have time)
- ☐ **If I didn't** want to go to the party, I wouldn't go. (but I want to go)
- ☐ **If you were** in my position, what would you do?
- ☐ It's a pity he can't drive. It would be useful **if he could**.

B We use the past in the same way after **wish** (I **wish I knew** / I **wish you were** etc.).

We use **wish** to say that we regret something, that something is not as we would like it to be:

- ☐ I **wish I knew** Paul's phone number.
(= I don't know it and I regret this)
- ☐ Do you ever **wish you could** fly?
(you can't fly)
- ☐ It's very crowded here. I **wish there weren't** so many people. (there are a lot of people)
- ☐ I **wish I didn't** have to work tomorrow, but unfortunately I do.

Compare:

- ☐ I'm **glad I live** here. (I live here and that's good)
- ☐ I **wish I lived** here. (I don't live here unfortunately)



C After **if** and **wish**, you can use **were** instead of **was** (**if I were** / I **wish it were** etc.).

You can also use **was**. So you can say:

- | | | |
|--|----|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> If I were you, I wouldn't buy that coat. | or | If I was you, ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'd go for a walk if it weren't so cold. | or | ... if it wasn't so cold. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I wish Anna were here. | or | I wish Anna was here. |

D We do not usually say 'if ... would'. We use **would** ('d) in the other part of the sentence:

- ☐ **If I were** rich, I **would** travel a lot. (*not* If I would be rich)
- ☐ Who **would** you ask **if you needed** help? (*not* if you would need)

In the same way we say:

- ☐ I **wish I had** something to read. (*not* I wish I would have)
- ☐ I **wish she were** here now. (*not* I wish she would be)

E **Could** sometimes means 'would be able to' and sometimes 'was/were able to':

- ☐ She **could get** a better job
if she **could speak** another language. (she **could get** = she **would be able to** get)
(if she **could speak** = if she **was able to** speak)
- ☐ I wish I **could** help you. (I wish I **could** = I wish I **was able to**)

1 Put the verb into the correct form.

- 1 If I knew (I / know) his number, I would phone him.
- 2 I wouldn't buy (I / not / buy) that coat if I were you.
- 3 (I / help) you if I could, but I'm afraid I can't.
- 4 This soup isn't very nice. (it / taste) better if it wasn't so salty.
- 5 We live in a city and don't need a car, but we would need one if
(we / live) in the country.
- 6 If we had the choice, (we / live) in the country.
- 7 I'd make a lot of changes if (I / be) the manager of the company.
- 8 I wouldn't call someone in the middle of the night if (it / not / be) important.
- 9 If I were you, (I / not / wait). (I / go) now.
- 10 You're always tired because you go to bed so late. If (you / not / go)
to bed so late every night, (you / not / be) tired all the time.
- 11 I think there are too many cars. If (there / not / be) so many cars,
..... (there / not / be) so much pollution.
- 12 We all need jobs and money, but what (you / do) if
..... (you / not / have) to work?

2 Write a sentence with if ... for each situation.

- 1 We don't see you very often because you live so far away.
If you didn't live so far away, we'd see you more often.
- 2 I like these shoes but they're too expensive, so I'm not going to buy them.
I them if so
- 3 We'd like to go on holiday, but we can't afford it.
We if
- 4 It would be nice to have lunch outside but it's raining, so we can't.
We
- 5 I don't want his advice, and that's why I'm not going to ask for it.
If

3 Write sentences beginning I wish

- 1 I don't know many people (and I'm lonely). I wish I knew more people.
- 2 I don't have much free time (and I need more). I wish
- 3 Helen isn't here (and I need to see her).
- 4 It's cold (and I hate cold weather).
- 5 I live in a big city (and I don't like it).
- 6 I can't find my phone (which is a problem).
- 7 I'm not feeling well (which isn't good).
- 8 I have to get up early tomorrow (but I'd prefer to sleep late).
.....
- 9 I don't know much about science (and I should know more).
.....

4 Write your own sentences beginning I wish

- 1 (somewhere you'd like to be now – on the beach, in New York, in bed etc.)
I wish I
- 2 (something you'd like to have – a motorbike, more friends, lots of money etc.)
.....
- 3 (something you'd like to be able to do – sing, travel more, cook etc.)
.....
- 4 (something you'd like to be – famous, more intelligent, good at sport etc.)
.....

Conditional 3: if I had known ... I wish I had known ...

A Study this example situation:

Last month Gary was in hospital for a few days. Rachel didn't know this.
A few days ago they met by chance. Rachel said:

If I'd known you were in hospital, **I would have gone** to visit you.
(= I didn't know, so I didn't go to visit you)

If I'd known = If I **had** known. This tells us that she *didn't* know before.

We use **if + had ('d)** ... to talk about the past (**if I'd known / if you'd done** etc.):

- ☐ I didn't see you when you passed me in the street. **If I'd seen** you, I would have said hello.
- ☐ They didn't go out last night. They would have gone out **if they hadn't been** so tired. (but they were tired)
- ☐ **If you'd been looking** where you were going, you wouldn't have walked into the wall. (but you weren't looking)
- ☐ The view was wonderful. I would have taken some pictures **if I'd had** (= if I **had had**) a camera with me. (but I didn't have a camera)

Compare:

- ☐ I'm not hungry. **If I was** hungry, I would eat something. (*now*)
- ☐ I wasn't hungry. **If I had been** hungry, I would have eaten something. (*past*)

B We do *not* say 'if something would have happened'. We use **would** in the other part of the sentence:

- ☐ **If I had seen** you, **I would have said** hello. (*not* If I would have seen you)

The short form **'d** can be **would** or **had**:

- ☐ If **I'd seen** you, (I'd seen = I **had** seen)
I'd have said hello. (I'd have said = I **would** have said)

C We use **had done/known/been** etc. in the same way after **wish**.

I wish something **had happened** = I am sorry that it didn't happen

I wish something **hadn't happened** = I am sorry that it happened

- ☐ **I wish I'd known** that Gary was ill. I would have gone to see him. (but I didn't know)
- ☐ I feel sick. **I wish I hadn't eaten** so much. (I ate too much)
- ☐ Do you **wish you'd studied** science instead of languages? (you didn't study science)

Compare:

- ☐ **I'm glad I saw** him. (= I **saw** him)
- ☐ **I wish I'd seen** him. (= I **didn't see** him)

We do *not* say 'wish ... would have ...'.

- ☐ The weather was cold. I wish it **had been** warmer. (*not* I wish it would have been)

D Compare **would (do)** and **would have (done)**:

- ☐ If I'd gone to the party last night, **I would be** tired now. (I am not tired now – *present*)
- ☐ If I'd gone to the party last night, **I would have met** lots of people. (I didn't meet lots of people – *past*)

Compare **would have**, **could have** and **might have**:

- ☐ If the weather hadn't been so bad, { we **would have gone** out.
we **could have gone** out.
(= we would have been able to go out)
we **might have gone** out.
(= maybe we would have gone out)

Exercises

1 Put the verb into the correct form.

- I didn't see you. If I'd seen (I / see) you, I would have said (I / say) hello.
- Sarah got to the station just in time to catch her train to the airport. If (she / miss) the train, (she / miss) her flight too.
- Thanks for reminding me about Lisa's birthday. (I / forget) if (you / not / remind) me.
- I didn't have your email address, so I couldn't contact you. If (I / have) your email address, (I / send) you an email.
- Their trip was OK, but (they / enjoy) it more if the weather (be) better.
- Sorry we're late. Our taxi got stuck in the traffic. (it / be) quicker if (we / walk).
- Why didn't you tell me about your problem? If (you / tell) me, (I / try) to help you.
- I'm not tired. If (I / be) tired, I'd go home now.
- I wasn't tired last night. If (I / be) tired, I would have gone home earlier.

2 For each situation, write a sentence beginning with **if**.

- I wasn't hungry, so I didn't eat anything.
If I'd been hungry, I would have eaten something.
- The accident happened because the road was icy.
If the road
- I didn't know that you had to get up early, so I didn't wake you up.
If I
- Unfortunately I lost my phone, so I couldn't call you.
.....
- Karen wasn't injured in the crash, because fortunately she was wearing a seat belt.
.....
- You didn't have any breakfast – that's why you're hungry now.
.....
- I didn't get a taxi because I didn't have enough money.
.....
- Dan didn't do well at school, so he couldn't go to university.
.....

3 Imagine that you are in these situations. For each situation, write a sentence with **I wish**.

- You've eaten too much and now you feel sick.
You say: I wish I hadn't eaten so much.
- When you were younger, you never learned to play a musical instrument. Now you regret this.
You say:
- You've painted the gate red. Now you think it doesn't look good. Red was the wrong colour.
You say:
- You decided to travel by car, but the journey was long and tiring. Going by train would have been better.
You say: I wish we
- Last year you went to New York with a friend. You didn't have time to do all the things you wanted to do.
You say:
- You moved to a new flat a few months ago. Now you don't like your new flat. You think that moving was a bad idea.
You say: