

## **Definition:**

*Conditionals describe the result of a certain condition. The if clause tells you the condition (If you study hard) and the main clause tells you the result (you will pass your exams). The order of the clauses does not change the meaning.*

*If you study hard, you will pass your exams.*

*You will pass your exams if you study hard.*

***Conditional sentences are often divided into different types.***

## **Zero conditional**

*We use the zero conditional to talk about things that are generally true, especially for laws and rules.*

*If I drink too much coffee, I can't sleep at night.*

*Ice melts if you heat it.*

*When the sun goes down, it gets dark.*

*The structure is: if/when + present simple >> present simple.*

## **First conditional**

*We use the first conditional when we talk about future situations we believe are real or possible.*

*If it doesn't rain tomorrow, we'll go to the beach.*

*Arsenal will be top of the league if they win.*

*When I finish work, I'll call you.*

*In first conditional sentences, the structure is usually: if/when + present simple >> will + infinitive.*

*It is also common to use this structure with unless, as long as, as soon as or in case instead of if.*

*I'll leave as soon as the babysitter arrives.*

*I don't want to stay in London unless I get a well-paid job.*

*I'll give you a key in case I'm not at home.*

*You can go to the party, as long as you're back by midnight.*

### **First conditional: form**

<i>conditional clause</i>	<i>main clause</i>
<i>if + present simple</i>	<i>modal verb with future meaning (shall/should/will/would/can/could/may/might)</i>
<i>If he <b>gets</b> a job in Liverpool,</i>	<i>he'll have to get up early. It's a long drive.</i>
<i>If Malik <b>rings</b>,</i>	<i>I <b>might ask</b> him to come over for dinner.</i>

### **Warning:**

*We use the modal verb in the main clause, not in the conditional clause.*

*If a lawyer **reads** the document, we **will see** if we've missed anything important.*

*Not: ~~If a lawyer will read the document...~~*

## Second conditional

*The second conditional is used to imagine present or future situations that are impossible or unlikely in reality.*

*If we had a garden, we could have a cat.*

*If I won a lot of money, I'd buy a big house in the country.*

*I wouldn't worry if I were you.*

*The structure is usually: if + past simple >> + would + infinitive.*

*When if is followed by the verb be, it is grammatically correct to say if I were, if he were, if she were and if it were. However, it is also common to hear these structures with was, especially in the he/she form.*

*If I were you, I wouldn't mention it.*

*If she was prime minister, she would invest more money in schools.*

*He would travel more if he was younger.*

### Second conditional: form

<i>conditional clause</i>	<i>main clause</i>
<i>if + past simple</i>	<i>modal verb with future-in-the-past meaning (should/would/might/could)</i>
<i>If you <b>asked</b> her nicely,</i>	<i>She <b>would</b> say yes, I'm sure.</i>

*We use a past form in the conditional clause to indicate a distance from reality, rather than indicating past time. We often use past forms in this way in English.*

### Warning:

*We use would in the main clause, not in the conditional clause:*

If you **decided** to take the exam, you would have to register by 31 March.

Not: ~~If you would decide to take the exam ...~~

### **The third conditional**

We use the third conditional when we imagine a different past, where something did or did not happen, and we imagine a different result:

If I **had played** better, I **would have won**. (I didn't play well and I didn't win.)

It **would have been** easier if Amadou **had brought** his own car. (Amadou didn't bring his own car, so the situation was difficult.)

If the dog **hadn't barked**, we **wouldn't have known** there was someone in the garden. (The dog barked, so we knew there was someone in the garden.)

### **Third conditional: form**

conditional clause	main clause
if + past perfect	modal verb with future-in-the-past meaning (should/would/might/could) + have + -ed form
If they <b>had left</b> earlier,	they <b>would have arrived</b> on time.

### **Warning:**

We use **would have + -ed** in the main clause, not in the conditional clause:

If he **had stayed** in the same room as Dave, it **would have been** a disaster.

Not: ~~If he would have stayed ... it would have been a disaster.~~

People do sometimes use the form with would have in informal speaking, but many speakers consider it incorrect.

## **Real conditionals**

Some conditions seem more real to us than others. Real conditionals refer to things that are true, that have happened, or are very likely to happen:

If you park here, they clamp your wheels. (It is always true that they clamp your wheels if, or every time, you park here.)

If I can't sleep, I listen to the radio. (it is often true that I can't sleep, so I listen to the radio)

In real conditional sentences, we can use the present simple or present continuous in both clauses for present situations, and the past simple or past continuous in both clauses for past situations. We can use these in various different combinations.

### **Present simple + present simple**

If the weather **is** fine, we **eat** outside on the terrace. (Every time this happens, this is what we do.)

### **Present continuous + present simple**

If the kids **are enjoying** themselves, we just **let** them go on playing till they're ready for bed. (Every time this happens, this is what we do.)

## **Present continuous + present continuous**

If the economy **is growing** by 6%, then **it is growing** too fast. (If it is true that the economy is growing by 6%, then it is true that it is growing too fast.)

## **Past simple + past simple**

If my father **had** a day off, we always **went** to see my granddad. (Every time that happened in the past that is what we did.)

## **Past simple + past continuous**

Kevin always **came** in to say hello if he **was going** past our house. (Every time he was going past our house, that is what he did.)

We can also use modal verbs in the main clause:

If we go out, we **can** usually **get** a baby sitter. (Every time we go out, it is usually possible to get a babysitter.)

If we wanted someone to fix something, we **would ask** our neighbour. He was always ready to help. (Every time we wanted someone, we would ask our neighbour.)

The table shows how the main types of conditionals relate to one another.

True	likely/possible	less likely/less possible	impossible
Real	first	second	third
If it <b>snows</b> , we <b>get</b> our skis out. (We do this	If she <b>gets</b> the job, we'll celebrate. (It is possible or likely she will get	If we <b>had</b> more students, we <b>would run</b> the course.	If the rent <b>had been</b> lower, I <b>would have taken</b> the flat.

<i>True</i>	<i>likely/possible</i>	<i>less likely/less possible</i>	<i>impossible</i>
<i>Real</i>	<i>first</i>	<i>second</i>	<i>third</i>
<i>every time it snows.)</i>	<i>the job.)</i>	<i>(It is less likely or unlikely that we will get more students.)</i>	<i>(The rent was not low enough.)</i>

### *If + should*

*We can use if with should to refer to events which might happen by chance or by accident:*

*If you **should** bump into Carol, can you tell her I'm looking for her? (If by chance you bump into Carol.)*

*If the government **should ever find itself in this situation again, it is to be hoped it would act more quickly.***

### **Conditional clauses with will or would**

*Will and would can be used in conditional clauses, either with the meaning of 'being willing to do something', or to refer to later results:*

*If Clare **will** meet us at the airport, it will save us a lot of time. (if Clare is willing to meet us)*

*If you **would** all stop shouting, I will try and explain the situation!*

*If it **will** make you happy, I'll stay at home tonight. (If it is true that you will be happy as a result, I'll stay at home tonight.)*

*We sometimes stress the will or would, especially if we doubt that the result will be the one mentioned:*

*If it really **would** save the planet, I'd stop using my car tomorrow. (If it really is true that the planet would be saved as a result, I would stop using my car, but I doubt it is true.)*

### **Mixed conditionals**

*Often, things that did or did not happen in the past have results which continue or are still important in the present. We can emphasise this by using **if** with a past perfect verb, and **would** in the main clause.*

*If I **hadn't met** Umar, I **wouldn't be** here now. (I met Umar so I'm here now.)*

*She **wouldn't still be working** for us if we **hadn't given** her a pay-rise. (We gave her a pay-rise so she is still working for us now.)*

### **Conditionals in speaking**

#### **Spoken English:**

*In speaking, we often use **if**-clauses without main clauses, especially when asking people politely to do things. **If** is usually followed by **will**, **would**, **can** or **could** when it is used to be polite:*