

Grammar

5a

First and Second Conditionals

Conditional clauses begin with *if* (or a word such as *when* which means the same as *if*) and follow basic patterns (see also 5b). This Section deals with patterns which form the First, Second and Zero Conditionals:

First Conditionals

We use First Conditionals to talk about events which are possible. The Conditional clause can refer to the present or the future.

Conditional clause	main clause
<i>if</i> + Present Simple	– <i>will</i> + bare infinitive
<i>If it rains,</i>	<i>we will stay at home.</i>

- The Conditional clause can come before or after the main clause. We use a comma at the end of the Conditional clause when it comes first:

If you don't try harder, you will fail.
You will fail if you don't try harder.

- Other structures are possible, depending on what you want to say:

Conditional clause	main clause
<i>if</i> + Present Simple	– modal verb
<i>If you behave yourself,</i>	<i>you can come.</i>
<i>if</i> + Present Simple	– <i>be going to</i> (future)
<i>If you don't work,</i>	<i>you're going to fail.</i>
<i>if</i> + Present Simple	– imperative
<i>If you need anything,</i>	<i>ask.</i>
<i>if</i> + Present Continuous	– <i>will</i> + bare infinitive
<i>If we're leaving soon,</i>	<i>I'll get my coat.</i>
<i>if</i> + Present Perfect	– <i>will</i> + bare infinitive.
<i>If I've finished,</i>	<i>I'll be able to come.</i>
<i>if</i> + Present Perfect	– modal verb
<i>If you've finished,</i>	<i>you can go out.</i>
Imperative	– <i>and/or</i> + <i>will</i>
<i>Eat less</i>	<i>and you'll get slim.</i>

Second Conditional

We use the Second Conditional for unlikely situations in the present or future:

Conditional clause	main clause
<i>if</i> + Past Simple	– <i>would</i>
<i>If I had enough money,</i>	<i>I'd retire.</i>

- Instead of *would* we can use other modal verbs:
If I lost my job, I might go abroad for a while.
- Compare First and Second Conditionals:
If I lose my job, I'll find life very difficult.
(= there is a possibility – First Conditional)
If I lost my job, I'd find life very difficult.
(= there is no evidence – Second Conditional)

Zero Conditional

We use the Zero Conditional to show that one action, result, etc. always follows another. We often use *when* for *if*:

Conditional clause	main clause
Present Simple	– Present Simple
<i>If/When water freezes,</i>	<i>it turns to ice.</i>
<i>When I travel by boat,</i>	<i>I'm always sick.</i>

(just) in case

This means 'because it is possible that...' and usually comes after the main clause (see page 97)
Paul will bring you a sweater in case it gets cold.

provided (that); as long as

These phrases suggest that there is one vital condition (see also page 97):

Provided you rest, you'll make a full recovery.

unless

We can use *unless* to replace *if...not* in Conditionals (see also page 97). After *unless*, we use a Present tense to talk about the future:

Unless you leave now, you will be late.
You will be late unless you go now.

Practice

1 Complete the sentences using these words and phrases.

was leaving can't might starts am would be becomes take should

- 1 If I not busy, I'll visit you.
- 2 If he careful, he wouldn't break things.
- 3 If he were slimmer, he much more attractive.
- 4 If she Prime Minister, she'll raise taxes.
- 5 Unless you stop wasting time, I'm right now.
- 6 If you don't give me more information, I help you.
- 7 If a fire, the alarm goes off.
- 8 You make your own food if you don't like my cooking.
- 9 more exercise and you'll soon feel better.
- 10 If the weather improves, I go for a stroll.

2 Write two sentences using the information. The first should express a *likely* event and the second a *less likely* but still possible event.

Example: we leave at eight / we arrive on time

likely: If we leave at eight o'clock, we'll arrive on time.

less likely: If we left at eight o'clock, we'd arrive on time.

- 1 am not busy / come and pick you up
likely:
less likely:
- 2 you fall / break your leg
likely:
less likely:
- 3 I drink too much wine / I feel sleepy
likely:
less likely:
- 4 you get the job / you have more freedom
likely:
less likely:
- 5 the questions be easy enough / everyone pass the test
likely:
less likely:

3 Complete the second sentence so that it is as similar in meaning as possible to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given.

Example: Her job is tiring because she doesn't have a secretary. **not**
If she had a secretary, her job would not be so tiring.

- 1 Give us your vote and we promise to make this country great again. **long**
We'll make this country great again us your vote.
- 2 There will be no more unemployment, if we win the elections. **jobs**
If we come to power, for everybody.
- 3 We will build more schools if we can afford to. **enough**
Provided, we will build more schools.
- 4 They won't let you into the theatre without a ticket. **unless**
You can't get into the theatre a ticket.
- 5 Bring your sun lotion because a heatwave is possible. **case**
Bring your sun lotion a heatwave.