

ZERO, FIRST AND SECOND CONDITIONALS

Conditionals

Conditional sentences express a condition (*If ...*) and the consequence of the condition. The consequence can be expressed before or after the condition:

If you win a sport scholarship, you can study at that American university.

You can study at that American university if you win a sport scholarship.

Note: If the condition comes first, a comma is used.

Zero conditional

We use the zero conditional to express things that are generally or always true (e.g. scientific facts):

If you heat water to 100 degrees centigrade, it boils.

Most people tend to be extremely aggressive if you accuse them of lying.

Note: In zero conditionals, *when* and *if* are often interchangeable. The present simple is used in both clauses.

First conditional

We use the first conditional to express a future situation which we think is real or possible:

I'll research that topic today, if I remember to take my laptop with me.

If it's not raining, we will go to the beach.

If there isn't a sandstorm again tomorrow, we'll go hiking in the desert.

Unless my local team loses their next match, they'll be top of the championship league.

Note: In first conditional sentences, it's not important which clause comes first.

The structure is usually *if* + present simple and *will* + infinitive.

We can often use *unless* instead of *if not*:

I won't be able to go snowboarding unless I get all my gear sorted out.

(If I don't get all my gear sorted out, I won't be able to go snowboarding.)

Second conditional

We use the second conditional to express things which are imaginary, contrary to the facts, impossible or improbable:

If I won something like an international golf tournament, I'd probably spend my winnings on buying a luxury yacht.

If you reduced your calorie intake and joined a gym, you would easily lose all your excess weight.

Note: In second conditional sentences, it's not important which clause comes first.

The structure is *if* + past simple and *would* + infinitive.

Although many conditional sentences use *if* + *will/would*, conditional sentences can also use other words instead of *if*, for example *when*, *as soon as*, and *in case*. Other modal verbs can be used instead of *will/would*, for example *can/could*, *may* and *might*.

Provided

Provided can sometimes be used instead of *if*:

Provided the weather is fine, you could take a tour around the city.

PRACTICE

1 Choose the correct option in *italics*.

- 1 The sun's very strong today, so if you don't sit in the shade, you *get* / *will get* badly burnt.
- 2 If you mix oxygen and hydrogen together, you *get* / *will get* water.
- 3 A lot of wild animals tend to attack if they *are* / *will be* scared.
- 4 When the manager is out of the office, her personal assistant *takes* / *will take* all her calls.
- 5 *If* / *Unless* the weather doesn't improve significantly, we'll have to postpone the barbecue.
- 6 You *won't win* / *will win* a fortune in the lottery unless you buy a ticket.

2 Complete the sentences with the first or second conditional form of the verbs.

- 1 If he (be) late, we (have to) leave without him.
- 2 If I (be) you, I (buy) that computer.
- 3 If you (come) this way, the doctor (see) you now.
- 4 If I (have) more money, I (not be) here now.
- 5 Provided you (study) hard, you (pass) the exam.
- 6 I (buy) a new Ferrari, if I (win) the lottery.

3 Tick the correct sentences. Correct the sentences with mistakes.

- 1 I would sleep more peacefully if the neighbours stop having parties late at night.

2 We take a taxi to get to the hotel from the airport if our flight arrives late.

3 Babies usually only cry when they are hungry, thirsty or wet.

4 If she doesn't go on the excursion, I will either.

5 We definitely will cancel the beach party unless it pours with rain.

6 If you weren't so stubborn, we wouldn't have so many massive rows.

THIRD CONDITIONAL

We use a third conditional to talk about:

- something which did not happen in the past and its results, which are imaginary:

If you had texted me yesterday, I would not have forgotten that I had an appointment at the hospital. (You didn't text me yesterday and I forgot I had an appointment at the hospital.)

If he hadn't jumped out of the way of the speeding car, it would have run him over. (He jumped out of the way of the speeding car, so it didn't run him over.)

Notes

- We can contract the third conditional as follows:

If you'd texted me yesterday, I wouldn't have forgotten that I had an appointment at the hospital.

- We can use *could* and *might* instead of *would*:

If I had revised better for the exam, I could have passed it. (I had the ability to pass the exam, but I didn't pass it, because I didn't revise well enough.)

If the temperature had been slightly higher, we might have had a picnic in the countryside. (The picnic was a possibility.)

If the temperature had been slightly higher, we would have had a picnic in the countryside. (The picnic was a certainty.)

MIXED CONDITIONALS

- When we want to use a conditional sentence to talk about both the past and the present, we can use the second conditional in one part of the sentence and third conditional in the other:

If the cost of even the cheapest seats wasn't so high (2nd conditional, present time), we'd have gone to see the opera (3rd conditional, past time).

The cost of even the cheapest seats is high and that is why the speaker didn't go to see the opera.

If the runner hadn't collapsed fifty metres from the finishing line (3rd conditional, past time), she would be the winner (2nd conditional, present time).

The runner collapsed fifty metres from the finishing line and that is why she isn't the winner this year.

Note: You cannot use zero or first conditionals in mixed conditional sentences.

<i>Wish or hope?</i>	
Optimistic about something? Use <i>hope</i> .	<i>I hope everybody arrives on time, so that our departure isn't delayed.</i>
Pessimistic about something happening, or sure it won't happen? Use <i>wish</i> .	
Talking about a present situation? Use <i>wish</i> + past simple.	<i>I wish I had an American work permit.</i> <i>She wishes she had more time to complete the project.</i>
Talking about something you would like to happen or something you would like someone to do? Use <i>wish</i> + <i>would</i> .	<i>I wish you would be more considerate towards the others in the group.</i> <i>He wishes his children would make a greater effort at school.</i>
Talking about past time? Use <i>wish</i> + past perfect.	<i>I wish I hadn't taken your advice about accepting that position in the sales department.</i> <i>She wished she hadn't set out on the journey.</i>

PRACTICE

1 Choose the correct verb tense.

- 1 If the bank to give me a loan, I wouldn't have bought that expensive motorbike.

A didn't agree **B** doesn't agree **C** hadn't agreed

- 2 I wouldn't have stayed at that luxury resort, if you it to me.
A didn't recommend **B** don't recommend
C hadn't recommended
- 3 She would have been seriously injured in that multiple car crash if she her seat belt.
A wouldn't wear **B** didn't wear **C** hadn't worn
- 4 If you for my support, I would have willingly helped you in any way I could.
A had asked **B** asked **C** ask
- 5 I would have been extremely disappointed, if you with us on holiday.
A don't come **B** hadn't come **C** wouldn't have come
- 6 If he rushing to take his pregnant wife to the maternity clinic, he wouldn't have driven through the traffic light on red.
A wasn't **B** hadn't been **C** wouldn't be

2 Complete the third conditional sentences with the verb in brackets.

- 1 If you (not / arrive) late at the check-in desk, we (not / miss) our international flight.

- 2 If they (go) to bed at a reasonable time,
they (not / wake up) so late.
- 3 If she (enrol) in the advanced course at art
school, she (might get) that fabulous job
as a fashion designer.
- 4 If you (be) born in that part of Switzerland,
you probably (learn) to speak three
languages.
- 5 If Ben (not go) on that motorbike trip
round South America, he (never meet) his
future wife.
- 6 She (take) a taxi from the railway station,
if she (have) enough money.