



Presentation

Use the second conditional to talk about unreal situations in the present or future.

Use *if* + past simple to talk about the imagined situation, and *would* to talk about the consequences.

If clause	Main clause
Use <i>if</i> + past simple to talk about: 1 a present situation that is the opposite of the real situation. 2 a future situation that you think is not likely to happen.	Use <i>would</i> to talk about the results of the imaginary situation.
<i>If I knew where he was, (but I don't)</i>	<i>I wouldn't tell the police.</i>
<i>If I had a million dollars, (but I haven't)</i>	
<i>If the bank gave you a million pounds, (you don't think it's likely to happen)</i>	<i>what would you do?</i>
	Note: the contracted form of <i>would</i> is 'd. The contracted form of <i>would not</i> is <i>wouldn't</i> .

was / were

You can use *was* or *were* with *I*, *he*, *she* and *it*. *Were* is considered to be more formal.

If I was/were him, I'd give the money to charity.

You often use *If I were you* ... to give advice:

If I were you, I'd hand myself in to the police.

could, might

Use *could* to talk about abilities in the imaginary situation:

If I had a million dollars, I could pay off all my debts.
(= I'd be able to pay.)

Use *might* to talk about one of two or more possible consequences:

If he went to the police, they might arrest him for theft.

TIP *could* can be used in both clauses. In the *if* clause, *could* is the past simple of *can*: *If I could sing* In the main clause, *could* = *would be able to*: ... *I could join your band.*

Real or imaginary?

When a present or future situation is real or likely, use a present verb form with *if*:

If you know where this man is, please contact the police.
(= It is possible that someone knows where the man is.)

When the situation is imaginary or unlikely, use the past simple with *if*:

If I knew where he was, I wouldn't tell the police.
(= I don't know where he is.)

Exercises

1 Choose the correct option.

- 1 If they invited me, I *might* / *would* go I suppose, but I'm not sure.
- 2 I *couldn't* / *wouldn't* worry if I were you.
- 3 If there were too many people staying at Bill's, you *could* / *would* stay at ours.
- 4 I *mightn't* / *couldn't* accept a job from him, even if he offered me a million dollars!
- 5 Even if they doubled my salary, I still *couldn't* / *wouldn't* be able to afford to buy a house.
- 6 Honestly, I *might* / *would* help you if I could.
- 7 If I *was* / *were* you, I'd tell your parents the whole truth.
- 8 If someone *gives* / *gave* me too much change by mistake, I wouldn't say anything!

2 Correct the mistakes in the sentences below. There is one mistake in each sentence.

- 1 If the bank gave me all that money by mistake, I gave it all away to charity.
- 2 I'd sack the person who made the mistake if I'd be the bank manager.
- 3 If I were the customer, I leave the country and change my name.
- 4 The bank might let the customer keep some of the money if he would admit he stole it.
- 5 I didn't recognise him if I saw him in the street.
- 6 If I were given a million dollars, I tried to spend it all as soon as I could.

3 Write the correct form of the verbs in brackets. Use the past simple or *would*. Use contracted forms where possible. Then listen and check.

- 1 A: If you are coming tonight, can you bring your car?
B: Sorry, if I ¹ (have) it, I ² (bring) it, but I've lent it to Zara.
- 2 A: What ³ (you/do), if you ⁴ (be) me?
B: I think I ⁵ (accept) the job, but only if they ⁶ (offer) to give me a pay rise!
- 3 A: If you know where he is, please tell me.
B: But I don't know! Honestly, if I ⁷ (know) where he ⁸ (be), you ⁹ (be) the first person I'd tell.

4 Complete these sentences so they are true for you.

- 1 If I had time tonight, I
- 2 If I didn't have to tomorrow, I
- 3 I don't usually if I don't have to.
- 4 I would never even if I