

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)

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)

38.1 Complete the sentences. Choose from:

did dropped found happened lost was went

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

38.2 What do you say in these situations?

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

38.3 Complete the sentences.

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

38.4 Write sentences beginning If ...

- 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.
- We're not going to stay at a hotel. (it / cost too much)
If we _____, it _____
- There's no point in telling you what happened. (you / not / believe)
If I _____
- Sally has no plans to leave her job. (it / hard to find another one)
If she _____
- Kevin is not going to apply for the job. (he / not / get it).