Explanations

- What is always true: present + present
  If I work late, I got tired.
  If the water is boiling/has boiled, it means the food is nearly ready.

- What was always true: past + past
  We went home early if it was foggy.
  If it was snowing, we stayed at home.

- Real situations: present + future
  Here we think that the outcome is really possible.
  If you keep driving like that, you're going to have an accident.
  If you see Mark, tell him I'll ring him tomorrow.

- Hypothetical situations: past + *would*
  These are unreal or imaginary situations.
  If I knew the answer, I'd tell you.
  If I was having a party, I wouldn't invite Marcia.
  The verb *be* usually takes the form *were* for all persons in these sentences, though *was* is used in everyday speech. Note that in the first person it is possible to use *should* instead of *would*.
  If I left home, I think I should be lonely.

- Hypothetical past situations: past perfect + *would have*
  These refer to past events.
  If I had known you were coming, I would have met you at the station.

- With modals
  Possible situations in the present
  If you get wet, you should change your clothes immediately.
  If you come early, we can discuss the problem together.
  Hypothetical situations
  If I had the money, I could help you.
  Hypothetical past situations
  If you hadn't reminded me, I might have forgotten.

- *If only*
  This adds emphasis to hypothetical situations. With past events it adds a sense of regret. The second part of the sentence is often left out.
  If only I had enough time!
  If only I hadn't drunk too much, this wouldn't have happened!

LIVEWORKSHEETS

- *Unless* and other alternatives to *if*

  Unless means *only if not.*

  I'll go ahead and get the tickets unless you call me this afternoon.

  (This means if you call me this afternoon, I won't get the tickets.)

  This means if one situation depends on another, *if can* be replaced by *as/so long as, provided* or *only if.* See Grammar 13 for *only if.*

  I'll do what you say provided the police are not informed.

  Even if describes how something will happen whatever the condition.

  Even if it rains, we'll still go for a picnic.

- Past events with results in the present: past perfect + *would*

  If Jim hadn't missed the plane, he would be here by now.

- *Should*

  After *if,* this makes the possibility of an event seem unlikely.

  If you should see Ann, could you ask her to call me?

  (This implies that I do not expect you to see Ann.)

- *Were to*

  This also makes an event seem more hypothetical.

  If I were to ask you to marry me, what would you say?

- *Happen to*

  This emphasises chance possibilities. It is often used with *should.*

  If you happen to see Helen, could you ask her to call me?

  If you should happen to be passing, drop in for a cup of tea.

- *If it were not for/if it hadn't been for*

  This describes how one event depends on another.

  If it weren't for Jim, this company would be in a mess.

  If it hadn't been for their goalkeeper, United would have lost.

- *Will* and *would:* politeness and emphasis

  These can be used as polite forms.

  If you will/would wait here, I'll see if Mrs Green is free.

  Will can also be used for emphasis, meaning 'insist on doing'.

  If you will stay out late, no wonder you are tired! (insist on staying out)

- *Supposing, otherwise*

  Supposing or *suppose* can replace *if,* mainly in everyday speech.

  Supposing you won the football pools, what would you do?

  Otherwise means 'or if not'. It can go at the beginning or end of the sentence.

  If you hadn't given us directions, we wouldn't have found the house.

  Thanks for your directions to the house. We wouldn't have found it otherwise.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

- *But for*

  This can replace *if not*. It is used in formal language, and must be followed by a noun form.

  If you hadn't helped us, we would have been in trouble.
  But for your help, we would have been in trouble.

- *If so/if not*

  These can refer to a sentence understood but not stated.

  There is a possibility that Jack will be late. If so, I will take his place.

- Colloquial omission of *if*

  An imperative can be used instead of an *if* clause in everyday speech.

  Sit down, and I'll make us a cup of tea. (If you sit down ...)

- *If and* adjectives

  In expressions such as *if it is necessary/possible* it is possible to omit the verb *be*.

  If interested, apply within.
  If necessary, take a taxi.

- Formally if can mean *although*, usually as *if* + adjective.

  The room was well-furnished, if a little badly decorated.

1 Put each verb in brackets into an appropriate verb form.

a) Now we're lost! If you had written down (write down) Marys directions, this.....(not/happen).

b) Why don't we emigrate? If we.....(live) in Australia, at least the weather,.....(be) better!

c) I'm afraid that Smith is a hardened criminal. If we .....(not/punish) him this time, he .....(only/commit) more crimes.

d) Thanks to Dr Jones, I'm still alive! If it..... (not/be) for her, I.....(be) dead for certain.

e) I'm sorry I can't lend you any money. You know that if I .....(have) it, I .....(lend) it to you.

f) Don't be afraid. If you,.....(touch) the dog, it,.....(not/bite).

g) In those days, if you,.....(have) a job, you .....(be) lucky.

h) It's always the same! If I.....(decide) to leave the office early, my boss.....(call) me after I've left!

i) What a terrible thing to happen! Just think, if we .....(not/miss) the plane, we .....(kill) in the crash.

j) Did you enjoy your meal? If you,.....(finish) eating, I,.....(clear away) the plates.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 Decide whether each sentence is grammatically possible or not.

a) If you haven't received a letter yet, you haven't got the job. possible
b) If it isn't for David, we are missing the bus.....
c) If it's raining, we go to the pub on the corner instead.....
d) If you didn't lend us the money, we would have gone to the bank.....
e) If you should happen to change your mind, drop me a line.....
f) If it wasn't for the rain, we would have been home by now.....
g) If you will drive so fast, no wonder the police keep stopping you.....
h) If I knew you were coming, I would have met you at the airport.....
i) But for you helped us, we would have taken much longer.....
j) If Jack joins the team, I'm leaving.....

5 Rewrite each sentence three times so that it contains the word in capitals.

a) We won't go away if the weather is bad.
We'll go away unless the weather's bad. UNLESS
.....ONLY
.....STAY

b) If you hurry up you won't be late.
.....DON'T
.....OR
.....WANT

c) If they offered you the job, would you accept?
.....WERE TO
.....SHOULD
.....HAPPENED

d) Without your help, I would have given up years ago.
.....HADN'T BEEN
.....BUT
.....HADN'T HELPED

e) I'll lend you the money on condition that you pay it back next week.
.....PROVIDED
.....LONG
.....ONLY

LIVEWORKSHEETS

7 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given.

a) I didn't have the money so I didn't buy a new suit.
would
If I *had had the money I would have bought* a new suit.

b) If you are in London by any chance, come and see me.
happen
If you.....come and see me.

c) If you insist on doing everything yourself, of course you'll feel tired!
will
If you....., of course you'll feel tired!

d) Please take a seat, and I'll inquire for you.
will
If you....., I'll inquire for you.

e) If you do the shopping, I'll cook lunch.
and
You.....I'll cook lunch.

f) If Pauline hadn't been interested, the project would have been abandoned.
interest
But.....the project would have been abandoned.

g) The fire was brought under control thanks to the night-watchman.
for
If it hadn't.....got out of control.

h) Dick is in prison because a detective recognised him.
if
Dick wouldn't.....recognised him.

i) I am not tall enough to reach the shelf.
taller
If I.....reach the shelf.

j) But for Helen acting so wonderfully, the play would be a flop.
wonderful
If it.....the play would be a flop.

k) It won't make any difference if City score first; United will still win.
even
United.....City score first.

1) Getting up early makes me feel hungry.
get
If.....makes me feel hungry.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Complete the text by writing one word in each space.

Mr Jeffries, I have decided against a prison sentence in your case. You may walk free from this court on (1) condition that you report to Chesham police station every Friday for the next six months. Should you fail to (2)……so, you will be given one warning; and if you persist (3)……failing to meet this obligation, you will return to this court for a harsher sentence. (4)……you can present good reason why you were unable to report to the station, you will (5)……yourself in severe trouble. If you are (6)……to attend because of illness, please note that a medical certificate must be produced, signed by your doctor, proving your state of health. You should realise that (7)……for your previous good conduct, I would (8)……had no hesitation in imposing a prison sentence. And I shall not forget that if your friend had (9)…… intervened in the fight, you might (10)……seriously injured the defendant.

LIVEWORKSHEETS