

59 The second conditional

FORM

<i>if</i> + past simple If T lived by the sea, If they asked me to work for them.	<i>would/could/might</i> + infinitive I would do a lot of swimming. I might accept.
or <i>would/could/might</i> + infinitive I would do a lot of swimming i might accept	<i>if</i> + past simple if I lived by the sea. if they asked me to work for them.

Notes

- The 'past' here is actually the subjunctive, which is the same as the past simple except for two forms - *I* and *he/she* + *were*:
If I were you, I'd change my job.
If John were here, he wouldn't be very happy.
- In conventional English, these two forms can be replaced by the past:
If I was you, I'd change my job.
If John was here, he wouldn't be very happy.
- would* is often shortened to *'d*.

USE

- The second conditional refers to the present or future.
The *if-event* is either
 - hypothetical;
If I worked in that factory, I'd soon change things, (but I don't work in that factory)
If I spoke French, my job would be a lot easier, (but I don't speak French)
 - unlikely:
If she left her husband, she might be happier, (but T don't think she's going to leave her husband)

Practice

Write these sentences, putting the verbs in brackets into the correct tense.

- If you drove more carefully, you (not have) so many accidents.
If you drove more carefully, you wouldn't have so many accidents.
- If he (get up) earlier, he'd get to work on time.
If he got up earlier, he'd get to work on time.
- If we (have) more time, I could tell you more about it.

- 4 If you (sell) more products, you'd earn more money.
- 5 I could help you if you (trust) me more.
- 6 His car would be a lot safer if he (buy) some new tyres.
- 7 The children would be better swimmers if they (go) swimming more frequently.
- 8 I wouldn't mind having children if we (live) in the country.
- 9 If I (be) you, I wouldn't worry about going to university.
- 10 If I (have) any money, I'd give you some.
- 11 Your parents (be) a lot happier if you phoned them more often.
- 12 Where would you like to live if you (not live) in Paris?
- 13 What would you do if you suddenly (win) half a million pounds?
- 14 Would you mind if I (not give) you the money I owe you today?
- 15 If I had to go to hospital, (not go) to this one.