

Third Conditional Sentences

When we are talking about the past, and we want to imagine how a situation could have been different if things hadn't happened the way they did, we use 3rd Conditional sentences. The verb in the if-clause (condition) is in the past perfect tense, and the verb in the main clause (consequence or result) is in the perfect conditional.

If-clause

the condition (unreal past)

If + past perfect

If + had + V₃

If Steve's mother hadn't been a young, unmarried, college graduate student,

Main clause

the (imaginary) result

perfect conditional

would
could + have + V₃
might

she wouldn't have decided to put him up for adoption.

Now complete the following conditional sentences about Steve Jobs' life.

1. The lawyer and his wife (adopt) Steve if they (not decide) at the last minute that they really wanted a girl.
2. If his adoptive parents (not promise) he would someday go to college, his biological mother (not sign) the final adoption papers.
3. If he (not drop out), he (not drop in) on a calligraphy class.
4. The first Mac (not have) its beautiful typography if he (not take) that calligraphy class.
5. Apple (not grow) into a \$2 billion company if they (not work) hard for ten years.
6. If he (not be) fired from Apple, he (not start) Pixar.
7. If Apple (not buy) NeXT, he (not return) to Apple.
8. None of this (happen) if he (not follow) his heart and intuition.

Can you "connect the dots" in your life? Think about two situations in the present and how different events in the past are connected to it. For each situation, write at least three third conditional sentences.

Example:

Monica is my girlfriend now.

If I hadn't taken guitar lessons, I wouldn't have met Monica.

If my dad hadn't taught me a little of music as a kid, I wouldn't have taken guitar lessons.

If my dad's father hadn't been a musician, my dad wouldn't have taught me a little music.

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SITUATION 1: _____

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

SITUATION 2: _____

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

Steve Jobs
1955-2011

