

if I do ... and if I did ...

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 ...



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

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

38.2 What do you say in these situations?

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

38.3 Complete the sentences.

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

38.4 Write sentences beginning If....

- 1 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.
- 2 We're not going to stay at a hotel. (it / cost too much)
If we , it
- 3 There's no point in telling you what happened. (you / not / believe)
If I
- 4 Sally has no plans to leave her job. (it / hard to find another one)
If she
- 5 Kevin is not going to apply for the job. (he / not / get it).