

## ZERO, FIRST AND SECOND CONDITIONALS

### Conditionals

Conditional sentences express a condition (*If ...*) and the consequence of the condition. The consequence can be expressed before or after the condition:

*If you win a sport scholarship, you can study at that American university.*

*You can study at that American university if you win a sport scholarship.*

**Note:** If the condition comes first, a comma is used.

### Zero conditional

We use the zero conditional to express things that are generally or always true (e.g. scientific facts):

*If you heat water to 100 degrees centigrade, it boils.*

*Most people tend to be extremely aggressive if you accuse them of lying.*

**Note:** In zero conditionals, *when* and *if* are often interchangeable. The present simple is used in both clauses.

## First conditional

We use the first conditional to express a future situation which we think is real or possible:

*I'll research that topic today, if I remember to take my laptop with me.*

*If it's not raining, we will go to the beach.*

*If there isn't a sandstorm again tomorrow, we'll go hiking in the desert.*

*Unless my local team loses their next match, they'll be top of the championship league.*

**Note:** In first conditional sentences, it's not important which clause comes first.

The structure is usually *if* + present simple and *will* + infinitive.

We can often use *unless* instead of *if not*:

*I won't be able to go snowboarding unless I get all my gear sorted out.*

*(If I don't get all my gear sorted out, I won't be able to go snowboarding.)*



### Second conditional

We use the second conditional to express things which are imaginary, contrary to the facts, impossible or improbable:

*If I won something like an international golf tournament, I'd probably spend my winnings on buying a luxury yacht.*

*If you reduced your calorie intake and joined a gym, you would easily lose all your excess weight.*

**Note:** In second conditional sentences, it's not important which clause comes first.

The structure is *if* + past simple and *would* + infinitive.

Although many conditional sentences use *if* + *will/would*, conditional sentences can also use other words instead of *if*, for example *when*, *as soon as*, and *in case*. Other modal verbs can be used instead of *will/would*, for example *can/could*, *may* and *might*.

### Provided

*Provided* can sometimes be used instead of *if*:

*Provided the weather is fine, you could take a tour around the city.*

## PRACTICE

### 1 Choose the correct option in *italics*.

- 1 The sun's very strong today, so if you don't sit in the shade, you *get* / *will get* badly burnt.
- 2 If you mix oxygen and hydrogen together, you *get* / *will get* water.
- 3 A lot of wild animals tend to attack if they *are* / *will be* scared.
- 4 When the manager is out of the office, her personal assistant *takes* / *will take* all her calls.
- 5 *If* / *Unless* the weather doesn't improve significantly, we'll have to postpone the barbecue.
- 6 You *won't win* / *will win* a fortune in the lottery unless you buy a ticket.

**2 Complete the sentences with the first or second conditional form of the verbs.**

- 1 If he ..... (be) late, we ..... (have to) leave without him.
- 2 If I ..... (be) you, I ..... (buy) that computer.
- 3 If you ..... (come) this way, the doctor ..... (see) you now.
- 4 If I ..... (have) more money, I ..... (not be) here now.
- 5 Provided you ..... (study) hard, you ..... (pass) the exam.
- 6 I ..... (buy) a new Ferrari, if I ..... (win) the lottery.

**3 Tick the correct sentences. Correct the sentences with mistakes.**

- 1 I would sleep more peacefully if the neighbours stop having parties late at night.

2 We take a taxi to get to the hotel from the airport if our flight arrives late.

3 Babies usually only cry when they are hungry, thirsty or wet.

4 If she doesn't go on the excursion, I will either.

5 We definitely will cancel the beach party unless it pours with rain.

6 If you weren't so stubborn, we wouldn't have so many massive rows.



## THIRD CONDITIONAL

We use a third conditional to talk about:

- something which did not happen in the past and its results, which are imaginary:

*If you had texted me yesterday, I would not have forgotten that I had an appointment at the hospital.* (You didn't text me yesterday and I forgot I had an appointment at the hospital.)

*If he hadn't jumped out of the way of the speeding car, it would have run him over.* (He jumped out of the way of the speeding car, so it didn't run him over.)

### Notes

- We can contract the third conditional as follows:

*If you'd texted me yesterday, I wouldn't have forgotten that I had an appointment at the hospital.*

- We can use *could* and *might* instead of *would*:

*If I had revised better for the exam, I could have passed it.* (I had the ability to pass the exam, but I didn't pass it, because I didn't revise well enough.)

*If the temperature had been slightly higher, we might have had a picnic in the countryside.* (The picnic was a possibility.)

*If the temperature had been slightly higher, we would have had a picnic in the countryside.* (The picnic was a certainty.)

## MIXED CONDITIONALS

- When we want to use a conditional sentence to talk about both the past and the present, we can use the second conditional in one part of the sentence and third conditional in the other:

*If the cost of even the cheapest seats wasn't so high (2nd conditional, present time), we'd have gone to see the opera (3rd conditional, past time).*

The cost of even the cheapest seats is high and that is why the speaker didn't go to see the opera.

*If the runner hadn't collapsed fifty metres from the finishing line (3rd conditional, past time), she would be the winner (2nd conditional, present time).*

The runner collapsed fifty metres from the finishing line and that is why she isn't the winner this year.

**Note:** You cannot use zero or first conditionals in mixed conditional sentences.



<i>Wish or hope?</i>	
Optimistic about something? Use <i>hope</i> .	<i>I hope everybody arrives on time, so that our departure isn't delayed.</i>
Pessimistic about something happening, or sure it won't happen? Use <i>wish</i> .	
Talking about a present situation? Use <i>wish</i> + past simple.	<i>I wish I had an American work permit.</i> <i>She wishes she had more time to complete the project.</i>
Talking about something you would like to happen or something you would like someone to do? Use <i>wish</i> + <i>would</i> .	<i>I wish you would be more considerate towards the others in the group.</i> <i>He wishes his children would make a greater effort at school.</i>
Talking about past time? Use <i>wish</i> + past perfect.	<i>I wish I hadn't taken your advice about accepting that position in the sales department.</i> <i>She wished she hadn't set out on the journey.</i>

## PRACTICE

### 1 Choose the correct verb tense.

- 1 If the bank ..... to give me a loan, I wouldn't have bought that expensive motorbike.

**A** didn't agree    **B** doesn't agree    **C** hadn't agreed



- 2 I wouldn't have stayed at that luxury resort, if you ..... it to me.  
**A** didn't recommend   **B** don't recommend  
**C** hadn't recommended
- 3 She would have been seriously injured in that multiple car crash if she ..... her seat belt.  
**A** wouldn't wear   **B** didn't wear   **C** hadn't worn
- 4 If you ..... for my support, I would have willingly helped you in any way I could.  
**A** had asked   **B** asked   **C** ask
- 5 I would have been extremely disappointed, if you ..... with us on holiday.  
**A** don't come   **B** hadn't come   **C** wouldn't have come
- 6 If he ..... rushing to take his pregnant wife to the maternity clinic, he wouldn't have driven through the traffic light on red.  
**A** wasn't   **B** hadn't been   **C** wouldn't be

**2** Complete the third conditional sentences with the verb in brackets.

- 1 If you ..... (not / arrive) late at the check-in desk, we ..... (not / miss) our international flight.

- 2 If they ..... (go) to bed at a reasonable time,  
they ..... (not / wake up) so late.
- 3 If she ..... (enrol) in the advanced course at art  
school, she ..... (might get) that fabulous job  
as a fashion designer.
- 4 If you ..... (be) born in that part of Switzerland,  
you probably ..... (learn) to speak three  
languages.
- 5 If Ben ..... (not go) on that motorbike trip  
round South America, he ..... (never meet) his  
future wife.
- 6 She ..... (take) a taxi from the railway station,  
if she ..... (have) enough money.