

Conditionals are sentences that describe possible situations and their consequences and consist of two clauses. They often use the word 'if' to introduce the condition.



First Conditional: Real Present or Future Situations

The first conditional is used for real or possible situations in the present or future. It describes likely outcomes based on a specific condition.

The typical structure of the first conditional is usually:

if + present simple (condition), will + infinitive (result)

At this level, it's important to note that other tenses, modals and alternatives instead of 'if' are commonly used.

Examples:

- If the weather is good this weekend, we'll travel to the coast and have a picnic.
- If you study regularly, you might become fluent before our trip!
- We'll celebrate this weekend unless my family has other plans.
- You can stay with us on the condition that you stick to our rules.

Other alternatives for 'if' include **when, as long as, assuming that, in case, even if, provided that, in the event of** and **given that**.



Second Conditional: Hypothetical or Unreal Situations

The second conditional is used for hypothetical, imaginary or unlikely situations in the present or future. This means that we understand the situation is unreal, but we express this wish or dream.

The typical structure of the second conditional is usually:

if + past simple (condition), would + infinitive (result)

It is also possible to use 'could' or 'might' instead of 'would'.

Examples:

- If we lived in the countryside, we'd spend much more time outdoors. (They don't live in the countryside.)
- The government might pay more attention if more people joined our activist group. (It's unlikely many people will join.)
- We would adopt all the animals at the shelter if we had more space. (They don't have more space so they can't adopt all the animals.)

**Third Conditional: Imaginary Results for Past Situations**

The third conditional is used to talk about hypothetical or imaginary results of past actions. These conditionals often express regret, missed opportunities or impossible outcomes. It expresses the idea of re-imagining what happened.

The typical structure of the third conditional is usually:

if + past perfect simple (condition), would have + past participle (result)

It is also possible to use 'could have' or 'might have' instead of 'would have'.

Examples:

- If I'd left earlier, I might have arrived on time. (I didn't leave earlier so I was late.)
- If she hadn't lost her purse, she would have come to the cinema with us. (She did lose her purse, so she couldn't go to the cinema.)
- They would have got hitched if they had found a witness. (They didn't find a witness, so they couldn't get married.)

Using a range of different conditionals in your speaking and writing is a great way to demonstrate your understanding of complex structures.

Use them in [Speaking Part 3](#) and [Writing Part 1 and 2](#).

You may also be tested on conditionals in the [Reading and Use of English Part 4](#).

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Tip!

Activity 1

Complete the sentences with an appropriate conditional form using the verbs in brackets.

- 1 If you'd like to take a seat, the manager _____ (see) you shortly.
- 2 You wouldn't have got the job if you _____ (send) your application on time.
- 3 If you don't _____ (understand) the text, you _____ (answer) the questions.
- 4 If it hadn't stopped raining, our trip _____ (ruin).
- 5 Would you climb Mount Everest if _____ (have) the chance?
- 6 If you could visit any country in the world, where _____ (go)?
- 7 I _____ (take) a gap year as soon as I finish school.
- 8 We _____ (win) the lottery if we _____ (choose) the numbers I wanted!

Activity 2

Match the beginnings 1–8 with the endings A–H.

1 I'll happily give you extra tuition... ☐

A ...I shouldn't even think about getting a puppy.

2 Unless I give up working full time,... ☐

B ...if you came into the room with me.

3 If I were you,... ☐

C ...unless you want to go somewhere else.

4 If the company had more money,... ☐

D ...if they hadn't cheated.

5 I'd feel much more comfortable... ☐

E ...if you don't want to lose customers.

6 I think we would have beat them... ☐

F ...we'd be able to invest in larger clients and projects.

7 I'd keep an eye on that receptionist... ☐

G ...as long as you are committed to putting in the extra hours.

8 I'm planning our trip to Prague... ☐

H ...I'd keep a low profile.



Activity 3

Complete the sentences with your own ideas.

1 If I had woken up earlier, _____

2 If I have to cancel my summer plans, _____

3 If I were the CEO of a successful business, _____

4 I would have failed my exams if _____

5 If I had a meeting with government leaders, I _____

6 If technology continues to advance quickly, _____

7 If I could change one thing about my country, I _____

8 If I don't take care of myself, I _____



Activity 4

Correct the mistakes in each sentence. Rewrite the corrected sentences.

1 If you need help, you could ask any member of staff.

2 Laura would have applied for the job if she have known about it.

3 You can't progress to level three unless you could have passed level two first.

4 Where would we have been now if money hadn't been invented?

5 I definitely wouldn't see you at the park unless I get this project finalised.

6 If I could speak fluent Japanese, I would have travelled to Japan.



Activity 5

For questions 1–6, 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. You must use between three and six words, including the word given. Here is an example.

Example: 0 I won't be able to hand in my assignment if the internet doesn't work.

UNLESS

Unless the internet works, I won't be able to hand in my assignment.

1 They'll keep track of the results if their football team makes the playoffs.

LONG

They'll keep track of the results _____ makes the playoffs.

2 Laura only mentioned it because she thought you would be interested.

HAVE

Laura _____ it if she thought you weren't interested.

3 My day-to-day tasks are much less complicated since you were employed.

MIGHT

My day-to-day tasks _____ easier if you hadn't been employed.

4 You're stressed all the time because you keep waking up late.

WERE

If _____ up earlier, you wouldn't be so stressed.

5 You won't receive a punishment as long as you tell the truth.

PROVIDED

You won't receive a punishment _____ the truth.

6 Johnathon must be struggling with money since he couldn't come on holiday with us this time.

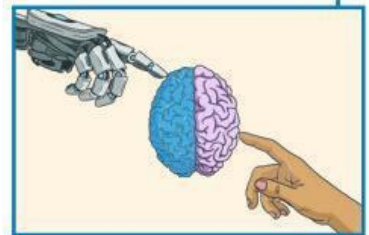
COULD

If Johnathon hadn't been struggling with money, _____ on holiday with us.

Activity 6

Imagine that your English teacher has asked you to write a report on a new course your school is providing. Read the exam task below.

Your school or college has recently introduced a new course on Artificial Intelligence (AI) for students. This course provides training on how to use AI effectively to support your studies, without being penalised or accused of cheating. You have started the course and have been asked to write a report. Your report should say what your study techniques were like before the course, what you have learnt so far and how you have applied AI to enhance your study experience.



Now answer the questions:

1 What information do you have to give?

2 Do you think a report should be written in a formal, informal or neutral style? Why?

3 What could you have learnt on this kind of course?

4 How could AI improve your study experiences? How could it effectively help you?

5 Would you recommend this course to other students? Why or why not?

6 Think of and write down three conditional sentences that you could include in your report. There is one example.

Example: The course states that using AI for revision is completely acceptable as long as we fact check the information given.

Now write your report in 220–260 words. Use your answers in Activity 6 to help you. Remember to include a mix of conditionals as naturally as possible.