

Conditional sentences



Conditional sentences consist of two parts:

- the **if-clause (hypothesis)**, which starts with **if** or **unless** (*If we work more,...*)
- the **main clause (result)** (...we will get more money.)
If we work more, we will get more money.

When the **if-clause** is **before** the **main clause**, we separate the two clauses with a **comma**. But we don't use a comma when the if-clause is after the main clause.

If you find the treasure, you'll be rich. **BUT** *You'll be rich if you find the treasure.*

Type 0



Formation

If-clause	Main clause
If / When + Present Simple	Present Simple

We use the **Present Simple** both in the If-clause and in the main clause.

If you mix red and yellow, you get orange.

We can use **When** instead of **If**.

When it is very cold, I don't cycle to work.

Use

We use the **zero conditional** to express a state that always applies, for example, for **general truths** or for **natural laws**.

If you don't water plants regularly, they die.

If I study hard, I always pass the exams.



Type 1



Formation

If-clause	Main clause
If + Present Simple	Will + infinitive
	Imperative Modal verb (can, may, might, must, should...) + infinitive

In the **if-clause** we can use **Present Perfect** if we refer to an action that has already finished.

If you have finished your homework, you can go out.

In the **main clause** we can use **instead** of **will + infinitive**:

- **Imperative** (to give instructions or commands)
If you miss the train, take the bus.
- **Modal verb + infinitive** (without "to")
If she finishes the work early, she may come with us.

Use

We use the **first conditional** to express something that it is **possible** or **probable** will happen in the present or future.

If Sheila gets the job, she will move to Paris.

Type 2



Formation

If-clause	Main clause
If + Past Simple	Would + infinitive
	Modal verb (could, might) + infinitive

In the If-clause we can use **were** instead of **was** in all persons.

If she were thinner, she would buy that skirt.

In the main clause we can use **could / might + infinitive** instead of **would + infinitive**.

If you spoke Italian, you could get a job in Italy.

Use

We use the second conditional:

- To express **unreal** or **imaginary** situations in the present or future.
If I had a big house, I would give a party.
- To give **advice**. In this case, we use the phrase **If I were you** in the If-clause.
If I were you, I wouldn't go on holiday in October.

Type 3



Formation

If-clause	Main clause
If + Past Perfect	Would + have + past participle
	Modal verb (could, might) + have + past participle

In the main clause we can use **could / might + have + past participle** instead of **would + have + past participle**.

If I had passed the exam, I could have gone to the university.

Use

- We use the **third conditional** to express **unreal situations** in the past, something that could have happened but didn't happen.
If he had known your phone number, he would have called you.
- We also use the third conditional to express **regret** about an event in the past or **criticism** about somebody else's actions.
If he had been more careful, he would have passed the driving test.

Interrogative form

We make the interrogative form of conditional sentences in the same way as we do normal questions. The clause which expresses the **result** (the **main clause**) appears in the **interrogative form**, and they follow the structure of the four types of **conditional sentences**.

Type 0

If / When + subject + present simple, (Wh-) do / does + subject + infinitive
(Wh-) do / does + subject + infinitive if / when + subject + present simple

When Susan is late for work, does her boss get angry?
What do you drink if you are thirsty?

Type 1

If + subject + present simple, (Wh-) will + subject + infinitive
(Wh-) will + subject + infinitive if + subject + present simple

Will he help me if I ask him?
If you have a party, who will you invite?

Type 2

If + subject + past simple, (Wh-) would + subject + infinitive
(Wh-) would + subject + infinitive if + subject + past simple

What would you do if you had a lot of money?
If we were late, would they be angry?

Type 3

If + subject + past perfect, (Wh-) would + subject + have + past participle
(Wh-) would + subject + have + past participle if + subject + past perfect

Would you have kept the money if you had found it?
If you had known her address, would you have written to her?

Remember that when there is a **question word**, it is always placed at the beginning of the question, before the auxiliary verb.
*If it rains this afternoon, **what** will you do?*

Unless

We can use **unless** instead of **If...not**.

If + negative verb

*If you **don't** study harder, you will fail the exams.*

Unless + affirmative verb

***Unless** you study harder, you will fail the exams.*

Unless has the meaning of **except if**.

*If we **don't** hurry, we will be late.*

*We will be late **unless** we hurry. → This sentence means: We will be late **except if** we hurry. (Unless=except if)*

Use

We can use **unless** with all types of conditionals if they have a logical sense, although it is more often used with **first conditional** sentences.

- We can use **unless** or **if...not** with a similar meaning in most **real** or **possible** conditional sentences (**first conditional** and sometimes **second conditional**).
*I won't help Helen **if** she **doesn't** ask me. = I won't help Helen **unless** she asks me.*
*He wouldn't go **if** they **didn't** invited him. = He wouldn't go **unless** they invited him.*
- But we don't usually use **unless** in **unreal** or **impossible** conditional sentences (**third conditional** and sometimes **second conditional**). In these sentences we use **if...not**.
*He would be happier **if** he **didn't** take things too seriously. (not ...unless he took...)*
***If** she **hadn't** gone to university, she would have gone into the police force. (not ...unless she had gone...)*
- We don't use **unless** in most **questions**, we use **if...not**.
If you don't pass the exams, what will you do? (not Unless you pass...)

Other expressions

Conditionals can be introduced with other expressions instead of **if** or **unless**:

as long as (= only if) *You can borrow my camera as long as you promise to take care.*

provided / providing (that) (= only if) *You can visit me any time provided / providing (that) you call me in advance.*

in case *I'll buy some mineral water in case I get thirsty (= I'll buy some mineral water before I get thirsty.)*

But: *I'll buy some mineral water if I get thirsty (= I'll buy some mineral water when I get thirsty.)*

on condition (that) (=provided) *On condition (that) she passes her exam, her parents will let her go to Italy for the holidays.*

but for (= if it wasn't / hadn't been for) *But for the rain, we would have enjoyed the picnic.*

or else (= if not / otherwise) *Hurry up, or else we'll miss the train.*

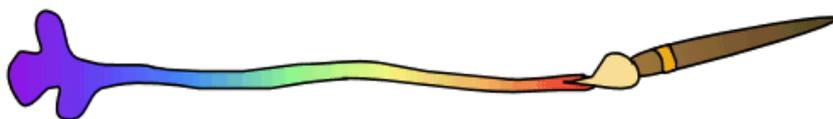
suppose / supposing (= imagine if) *Suppose / supposing the lights went out, what would we do?*

only if *She will go to the party only if she has finished her work.*

even if *He wouldn't talk about his plans even if you begged him to.*

whether *Whether he agrees with me or not is not important to me.*

Exercises



1 Make **zero conditional** sentences using the prompts, as in the example. You can use **if** or **when**.

1. you / mix / blue and yellow / you / get / green

When you mix blue and yellow, you get green.

2. I / watch / television late at night / I / fall / asleep

3. Sandra / have / a party / the neighbours / get / angry

4. you / lose / weight / you / not eat

5. the weather / be / nice / Peter / walk / to work

6. you / add / salt / the food / taste / better

7. my son / get / sick / he / eat / too many sweets

8. my mother / have / a headache / she / take / an aspirin

9. you / heat / ice / it / melt

10. it / snow / children / make / snowmen

11. I / miss / the 7 o'clock bus / I / be / late for work

12. Janet / not sleep / she / drink / coffee

2 Complete the sentences with the correct tense of the verbs in brackets to form **first conditional** sentences.

1. If you _____ (talk) to the parrot, it _____ (repeat) what you say.

2. I _____ (take) my jacket with me if it _____ (be) cold tomorrow.

3. If Peter _____ (not feed) the cat, it _____ (die)

4. If Jenny _____ (invite) me to the party, I _____ (go).

5. Andrew _____ (become) ill if he _____ (not rest).

6. _____ you _____ (take) me with you if you _____ (go) to the cinema?

7. They _____ (not let) you in if you _____ (not buy) a ticket.

8. If it _____ (rain), I _____ (not go) to the football match today.

9. _____ you _____ (help) me if you _____ (not be) too busy.

10. Tomas _____ (feel) better if he _____ (sleep) a bit.

11. If they _____ (not get) an umbrella, they _____ (get) wet.

12. If Sam _____ (win) some money on the pools, he _____ (go) on holiday.

3 Complete the sentences with the correct tense of the verbs in brackets to form **second conditional** sentences.

- If you _____ (fail) the exam, you _____ (be able) to take it again next year.
- If I _____ (not have) all this work, I _____ (go) out this evening.
- We _____ (not miss) so many phone calls if we _____ (buy) an answerphone.
- If you _____ (see) a terror film, _____ you _____ (be) frightened?
- Pamela _____ (feel) better if she _____ (give up) smoking.
- If I _____ (be) you, I _____ (take) a taxi.
- If they _____ (have) enough money, they _____ (buy) a new car.
- If your mother _____ (not like) your present, what _____ you _____ (do)?
- If Sheila _____ (not be) so rude, people _____ (like) her.
- She _____ (not walk) to school if she _____ (have) a bike.
- If my grandparents _____ (live) nearer, I _____ (visit) them more often.
- If the weather _____ (be) better, the children _____ (play) in the garden.

4 Complete the sentences with the correct tense of the verbs in brackets to form **third conditional** sentences.

- Robin _____ (watch) the football match if he _____ (not be) at work.
- _____ Harry _____ (lose) his passport if he _____ (put) it in a safer place?
- If Mary _____ (meet) the man of her dreams, she _____ (marry) him.
- If the film _____ (not be) so boring, I _____ (not fall) asleep.
- I _____ (phone) them if I _____ (not forget) their phone number.
- If Sara _____ (invite) you to her party, _____ you _____ (go)?
- If we _____ (bring) the map, we _____ (not get) lost.
- If it _____ (not rain) last weekend, I _____ (go) to the beach.
- This _____ (not happen) if you _____ (listen) my advice.
- If Kevin _____ (study) harder, he _____ (pass) the exam.
- I _____ (arrive) on time if my car _____ (not break down).
- If Jim _____ (run) faster, he _____ (win) the race.

5 Make **questions** with the words in prompts, then write your own answers. You have the type in brackets.

- How / you / feel / if / you / win / a prize / ? **(Second)**

- If / you / go / to a desert island / what / you / take / with you / ? **(Second)**

- What / you / eat / if / you / be / very hungry / ? **(Zero)**

- If / you / find / a wallet in the street yesterday / what / you / do / ? **(Third)**

- If / you / go out / next weekend / where / you / go / ? **(First)**

- What / you / do / if / you / see / an UFO / ? **(Second)**

- Who / you / invite / if / you / have / a party / ? **(Second)**

6 Rewrite these sentences using **unless** or **if ... not**.

- He will break his leg if he doesn't skate carefully.

- If you don't take the dog for a walk, it will bark at night.

- She will break the bottle unless she is careful.

- If I don't have any money, I can't go on holiday.

- Unless he phones now, we won't wait for him.

- If Kelly doesn't drive slowly in the rain, she will have an accident.

- They will be very disappointed if you don't go to the party.

- Unless you stop eating lots of sweets, you will put on weight.

- He will lose his job unless he works harder.

7

Choose the correct alternative for each sentence.

1. Jenny _____ the 8 o'clock news tonight is she has time.
a) watches b) will watch c) doesn't watch
2. If I _____ you, I would buy her a CD.
a) am b) had been c) were
3. My mother will go shopping _____.
a) unless it doesn't rain b) if it rains c) unless it rains
4. If he had known about the dance, he _____ it.
a) might attend b) might have attended c) would attend
5. If you add baking powder to a cake mixture, it _____ when it's baking.
a) would rise b) would have risen c) rises
6. If you _____ on annoying me, I will leave.
a) have insisted b) insist c) insisted
7. If I _____ an alarm, the burglars wouldn't have broken into my house last week.
a) had installed b) installed c) will install
8. You _____ people everywhere at any time if you had a mobile phone.
a) would have contacted b) could contact c) will contact
9. If the machine stops, _____ that red button to start it again.
a) will press b) must press c) press
10. If Jake _____ talking on the phone, I'll make a phone call.
a) has stopped b) stopped c) will stop
11. If you had come earlier, you _____ the party.
a) won't miss b) wouldn't have missed c) wouldn't miss
12. Howard will buy a car _____ his driving license.
a) unless he gets b) if he gets c) if he doesn't get
13. If we _____ the plane, we could save time.
a) took b) take c) had taken
14. A businessman won't succeed _____ he works hard.
a) if b) if not c) unless
15. If he _____ careful, he wouldn't have fallen down the stairs.
a) was b) would be c) had been

ANSWER KEY

1

2. If / When I watch television late at night, I fall asleep
3. If / When Sandra has a party, the neighbours get angry
4. You lose weight if / when you don't eat
5. If / When the weather is nice, Peter walks to work
6. If / When you add salt, the food tastes better
7. My son gets sick if / when he eats too many sweets
8. If / When my mother has a headache, she takes an aspirin
9. If / When you heat ice, it melts
10. If / When it snows children make snowmen
11. If / When I miss the 7 o'clock bus, I am late for work
12. Janet doesn't sleep if / when she drinks coffee

2

1. talk / will repeat
2. will take / is
3. doesn't feed / will die
4. invites / will go
5. will become / doesn't rest
6. Will ... take / go
7. won't let / don't buy
8. rains / won't go
9. Will ... help / aren't
10. will feel / sleeps
11. don't get / will get
12. wins / will go

3

1. failed / would be able
2. didn't have / would go
3. wouldn't miss / bought
4. saw / would ... be
5. would feel / gave up
6. were / would take
7. had / would buy
8. didn't like / would ... do
9. wasn't - weren't / would like
10. wouldn't walk / had
11. lived / would visit
12. was - were / would play

4

1. would have watched / hadn't been
2. Would ... have lost / had put
3. had met / would have married
4. hadn't been / wouldn't have fallen
5. would have phoned / hadn't forgotten
6. had invited / would ... have gone
7. had brought / wouldn't have got
8. hadn't rained / would have gone
9. wouldn't have happened / had listened
10. had studied / would have passed
11. would have arrived / hadn't broken down
12. had run / would have won

5

1. How would you feel if you won a prize?
2. If you went to a desert island, what would you take with you?
3. What do you eat when you are very hungry?
4. If you had found a wallet in the street yesterday, what would you have done?
5. If you go out next weekend, where will you go?
6. What would you do if you saw an UFO?
7. Who would you invite if you had a party?

6

1. He will break his leg unless he skates carefully.
2. Unless you take the dog for a walk, it will bark at night.
3. She will break the bottle if she isn't careful.
4. Unless I have some money, I can't go on holiday.
5. If he doesn't phone now, we won't wait for him.
6. Unless Kelly drives slowly in the rain, she will have an accident.
7. They will be very disappointed unless you go to the party.
8. If you don't stop eating lots of sweets, you will put on weight.
9. He will lose his job if he doesn't work harder.

7

1. b 2. c 3. c 4. b 5. c 6. b 7. a 8. b 9. c 10. a 11. b 12. b
13. a 14. c 15. c