

# CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

## ZERO CONDITIONAL

These sentences refer to “all time”, not just the present or future. They express a situation that **is always true**. **If** means **when** or **whenever**. It is used to talk about habits and general truths, or scientific facts, things which always happen under certain conditions:

- *General truth and scientific facts:*  
*If air **expands**, it **becomes** lighter.*
- *Habits, things that happen again and again:*  
*If I **fly**, I never **eat** before the flight.*

<b>If + Present Simple</b>	<b>Present Simple</b>
<i>If you press the button,</i>	<i>the machine <b>starts</b> to work</i>
<i>If you have a microwave,</i>	<i>you <b>cook</b> more quickly.</i>
<b>If + Present Simple</b>	<b>Imperative</b>
<i>If the seat belt light is on,</i>	<i><b>don't leave</b> your seat.</i>

This kind of conditional is used to describe general truths, including **scientific processes**.

1. Complete the following:

- If you lower the temperature of water, it eventually \_\_\_\_\_
- Wood floats if you \_\_\_\_\_
- If water is heated, it \_\_\_\_\_
- If you strike a match, it \_\_\_\_\_
- Plants die if you \_\_\_\_\_
- You put on weight if you \_\_\_\_\_

1. don't water them
2. lights
3. eat too much
4. boils
5. freezes
6. drop it in water

This kind of conditional can also be used to **give instructions**.

2. Match the if-clauses in Column A with the correct imperative from Column B, and revise your phrasal verbs.

### Column A

1. If you make a mistake,
2. If your car runs out of petrol,
3. If you're not ready for your driving test,
4. If you see an interesting recipe in a magazine,
5. If you receive the application form,
6. If you have finished with his pen,
7. If you can't remember the phone number,
8. If the meat is too big to go in the pan,
9. If you get another frightening letter,
10. If the tree is in danger of falling,

### Column B

- a. tear it out
- b. cut it down
- c. give it back
- d. cut it up
- e. rub it out
- f. put it off
- g. tear it up
- h. fill it up
- i. fill it in
- j. look it up

## FIRST CONDITIONAL

First Conditional sentences express a **possible** condition and its **probable** result in the future.

<i>If + Present Simple</i>	<i>Will + Infinitive</i>
<i>If I find your wallet,</i>	<i>I'll let you know.</i>
<i>If there isn't a hotel,</i>	<i>where will you stay?</i>

Change in the order of the clauses:

<i>Will + Infinitive</i>	<i>If + Present Simple</i>
<i>You won't pass the exam</i>	<i>if you don't revise.</i>
<i>What will you do</i>	<i>if you don't find a job?</i>

When the **if-clause** is at the beginning of the sentence is separated by a comma, when the main clause (**will- clause**) is at the beginning there is no comma.

We can also use the **present continuous**, **present perfect** or **modals** instead of the present simple in the If-clause, and a **modal verb**, the **imperative** or **be going to** in the main clause.

If Clause	Main Clause
<i>(modal)If you can find my wallet,</i>	<i>I'll buy you an ice-cream (future simple)</i>
<i>(present perfect)If you have finished eating,</i>	<i>I'll take your plate away.(future simple)</i>
<i>(present simple)If you go shopping,</i>	<i>get some apples.(imperative)</i>
<i>(present continuous)If you are revising for your exams,</i>	<i>I won't disturb you (future simple)</i>
<i>(present simple) if he doesn't take care,</i>	<i>he is going to have an accident. ( be going to)</i>

We can change the order of the clauses. Pay attention to the comma.

Main Clause	If Clause
<i>You can sit here</i>	<i>if you want.</i>

☛ Note : We can use **unless (a menos que)** instead of **If not**.  
(Unless indica una excepción a lo que se dice)  
*I won't go to the party **unless** you come too.*

## SECOND TYPE

- We use the Second Conditional to *express an unreal situation and its probable result*. The situation or condition is improbable, imaginary, or contrary to facts. It is used to talk about *hypothetical or improbable situations in the present and future*.

We also use this type *to give advice*, talk about *ambitions and future expectations*.

*If I were the President, I wouldn't increase taxation. (but it is not very likely that I will ever be the president)*

*If you didn't listen to music, you would study better.*

- Other modal verbs are possible in the result clause.

Conditional Clause If + Past Simple	Result Clause Would /could / might /should + Infinitive
<i>If I won some money,</i>	<i>I would go round the world.</i>
<i>If I were* rich,</i>	<i>I wouldn't work.</i>
<i>If I saved a little every week,</i>	<i>I might be able to save up for a car.</i>
Result Clause Would /could / might /should + Infinitive	Conditional Clause If + Past Simple
<i>I could buy some new clothes</i>	<i>If I had some money.</i>

- **\*were** can be used instead of **was** on the first and third person singular. In formal English is more common the use of **were** for all persons, but in informal English it is common the normal use of the verb to be in the past ( I was, you were, he was..)

*If I were you, I'd.....* is used to give advice. In this expression we cannot change **were** for **was**.

*If I were you, I'd apologise to her.*

~~*If I was you, I'd apologise to her.*~~

- Note that when we use **could** and **might** instead of **would** is to indicate less certainty about a situation.

*If I knew her phone number, I could/might call her.*

## First or second conditional?

Both conditionals refer to the present and future. The difference is about probability, not time. It is usually clear which conditional to use. **First conditional** sentences are **real and possible**; **second conditional** sentences **express situations that will probably never happen**.

*If I lose my job, I'll.....( there is a strong possibility of being made redundant)*

*If I lost my job, I'd.....( I'm just speculating)*

### 1. Choose the correct answer

London is one of the most wonderful cities in the world. It (**1. offers /is offering/ offer/ offered**) so many attractions that one can (**2. to stay/ staying/ stayed/ stay**) there for months and never get bored.

If I (**3. am / was / were / will be**) a Londoner, I (**4. will / would / have / am**) live near one of (**5. it's / its / their / they're**) beautiful parks. There are so many plays, musicals and concerts there. I (**6. would spend / had spent/ spent/ am spending**) hours in London's bookshops if I (**7. had lived / would live / will live / lived**) there.

If it (**8. were / weren't/ hadn't / wouldn't be**) so expensive, I (**9. bought / had bought /, would buy / will buy**) a ticket and (**10. would fly / to fly / flying / flown**) to England today.

2. Look at the conversations. Decide whether each incomplete sentence should be a first or second conditional. Some of them have time clauses. Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in brackets.

- 1. A. Do you think you've had an interesting life?
- B. Oh yes. If I \_\_\_\_\_ (have) my time again, I \_\_\_\_\_ (do) exactly the same.
  
- 2. A. Can you tell Sally I won't be here tomorrow?
- B. OK. I \_\_\_\_\_ (tell) her if I \_\_\_\_\_ (see) her.
- A. No, on second thoughts I \_\_\_\_\_ (wait) until she \_\_\_\_\_ (come) back.
  
- 3. A. I think I'll go out this evening.
- B. Well, if you \_\_\_\_\_ (take) the car, you \_\_\_\_\_ (need) to put some petrol in it. Will you be late?
- A. Yes. You \_\_\_\_\_ probably \_\_\_\_\_ (be) in bed when I \_\_\_\_\_ (get) back.

- 4. A: Can you lend me 10\$?
- B. No, I'm sorry.
- A. But I need it urgently, and I \_\_\_\_\_ (pay) you back as soon as I \_\_\_\_\_(get) paid.
- B. Look, I \_\_\_\_\_(lend) it to you if I \_\_\_\_\_(have) it, but I'm broke.
  
- 5. A. This letter's important. It must get there by tomorrow.
- B. OK. If you \_\_\_\_\_ (leave) it there, I \_\_\_\_\_ (post) it for you.
- A. You won't forget?
- B. Don't worry.

### THIRD TYPE

- We use this conditional to **speculate about past events**, and about **how** things that happened or didn't happen might have affected other things.

- We also express **reproach or regret** with this type of conditional.

If + Past Perfect	<i>Would / could* / might* + have + Past participle</i>
<i>If I <b>had known</b> his background,</i>	I <b>wouldn't have employed</b> him
<i>If you <b>hadn't driven</b> so fast,</i>	You <b>wouldn't have had</b> the accident.
<i>If I <b>hadn't been ill</b>,</i>	<b>I could / might have passed</b> the exam.*

- \* We can also use **could** and **might** instead of **would** to indicate less certainty about a situation.

*Jill **might have come** to the party if she had known about it in time*

*We **couldn't have bought** our flat if my mum hadn't won the lottery last year*

#### 1. Rewrite the following sentences without changing the meaning of the original sentence.

- a. The runner twisted his ankle because he fell.  
*If the runner hadn't fallen, he wouldn't have twisted his ankle.*
- b. The driver fell asleep at the wheel and caused an accident.  
If \_\_\_\_\_
- c. I went to sleep very late last night because I was so excited.  
If \_\_\_\_\_

d. We didn't move to Paris last year and so I didn't learn French.  
If \_\_\_\_\_

e. Dana was late for work because she woke up late.  
If \_\_\_\_\_

f. We didn't buy the house we wanted because it was too far from  
the city.  
If \_\_\_\_\_

g. They bought the cheapest microwave oven because they didn't  
have any money.  
If \_\_\_\_\_

h. When Barbie fell down the stairs, she broke her arm.  
If \_\_\_\_\_

4. Rewrite the following sentences without altering their meaning.

a. If you aren't on a diet, try the cheesecake. (unless)

b. Danny wants to lose some weight, but he doesn't have any will  
power. (if)

c. Sue didn't mention the tennis game so I didn't turn up to watch. (if)

d. In my opinion, you should drink low-fat milk. (if)

e. You should have a medical check-up when starting on a diet. (If)

f. I didn't buy any vegetables so I couldn't make a salad. (if)

g. Paul won't swim in the pool because there is no lifeguard. (if)

h. Peter gets angry with people who don't take him seriously. (unless)

## PRACTICE (1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> type)

### 1. Complete:

1. I wouldn't have voted for him if I \_\_\_\_\_(have) a vote then.
2. If you \_\_\_\_\_(read) the instructions carefully, you wouldn't have broken it out.
3. You \_\_\_\_\_(play) bridge better if you didn't talk so much.
4. If you leave your glasses there someone \_\_\_\_\_(sit) on them.
5. I could have repaired the roof myself if I \_\_\_\_\_(have) a long ladder.
6. If the milkman \_\_\_\_\_(come), tell him to leave two pints.
7. If you put some mustard in the sandwiches they \_\_\_\_\_(taste) better.
8. If someone offered to buy you one of those rings, which one \_\_\_\_\_(you/choose)?
9. If he goes to Paris, where \_\_\_\_\_(he/stay)?
10. If she \_\_\_\_\_(speak) more slowly, I would have understood her.
11. What \_\_\_\_\_(happen) if I had pressed that button?
12. If you slept under a mosquito net, you \_\_\_\_\_(not be bitten) so often.
13. She won't open the door unless she \_\_\_\_\_(know) who it is.
14. If you knew you had only six weeks to live how \_\_\_\_\_(you / spend) that time?
15. But for the fog we \_\_\_\_\_(reach) our destination ages ago.
16. Unless he \_\_\_\_\_(sell) more he won't get much commission.
17. We'll have a long way to walk if we \_\_\_\_\_(run) out of petrol here.
18. If I had known that you couldn't eat octopus, I \_\_\_\_\_(not buy) it.
19. Had they banned the sale of alcohol there \_\_\_\_\_(be) less football violence.