ENGLISH LANGUAGE I

MODULE 3:

CONDITIONALS

Explanations

- What is always true: present + present

    If **I work** *late, I got tired.*

    If the water **is boiling/has boiled,** *it means the food is nearly ready.*

- What was always true: past + past

    We **went** *home early if it* **was** *foggy.*

    If it **was snowing,** *we* **stayed** *at home.*

- Real situations: present + future

    Here we think that the outcome is really possible.

    If you **keep** *driving like that, you're going* **to have** *an accident.*

    If you see Mark, tell him **I'll ring** *him tomorrow.*

- Hypothetical situations: past + *would*

    These are unreal or imaginary situations.

    If **I knew** *the answer, I'd tell you.*

    If **I was having** *a party, I* **wouldn't** *invite Marcia.*

    The verb *be* usually takes the form *were* for all persons in these sentences, though *was* is used in everyday speech. Note that in the first person it is possible to use *should* instead of *would*.

    If I left home, I think I **should** *be lonely.*

- Hypothetical past situations: past perfect + *would have*

    These refer to past events.

    If **I had known** *you were coming, I* **would have met** *you at the station.*

- With modals

    Possible situations in the present

    If you get wet, you **should** *change your clothes immediately.*

    If you come early, we can discuss the problem together.

    Hypothetical situations

    If I had the money, I **could** *help you.*

    Hypothetical past situations

    If you hadn't reminded me, I **might have** *forgotten.*

- *If only*

    This adds emphasis to hypothetical situations. With past events it adds a sense of regret. The second part of the sentence is often left out.

    If only *I had enough time!*

    If only *I hadn't drunk too much, this wouldn't have happened!*

2

- *Unless* and other alternatives to *if*
  Unless means *only if not.*
    *I'll go ahead and get the tickets **unless** you call me this afternoon.*
  (This means if you call me this afternoon, I won't get the tickets.)
  This means if one situation depends on another, *if can* be replaced by *as/so long as, provided* or *only if.* See Grammar 13 for *only if.*
    *I'll do what you say **provided** the police are not informed.*
  Even if describes how something will happen whatever the condition.
    ***Even** if it rains, we'll still go for a picnic.*

- Past events with results in the present: past perfect + *would*
    *If Jim **hadn't missed** the plane, he **would** be here by now.*

- *Should*
  After *if,* this makes the possibility of an event seem unlikely.
    *If you **should see** Ann, could you ask her to call me?*
  (This implies that I do not expect you to see Ann.)

- *Were to*
  This also makes an event seem more hypothetical.
    *If I **were to ask** you to marry me, what would you say?*

- *Happen to*
  This emphasises chance possibilities. It is often used with *should.*
    *If you **happen to see** Helen, could you ask her to call me?*
    *If you **should happen to be passing,** drop in for a cup of tea.*

- *If it were not for/if it hadn't been for*
  This describes how one event depends on another.
    *If it **weren't for** Jim, this company would be in a mess.*
    *If it **hadn't been for** their goalkeeper, United would have lost.*

- *Will* and *would:* politeness and emphasis
  These can be used as polite forms.
    *If you **will/would wait** here, I'll see if Mrs Green is free.*
  Will can also be used for emphasis, meaning 'insist on doing'.
    *If you **will** stay out late, no wonder you are tired!* (insist on staying out)

Other ways of making a conditional sentence

- *Supposing, otherwise*
  Supposing or *suppose* can replace *if,* mainly in everyday speech.
    ***Supposing** you won the football pools, what would you do?*
  Otherwise means 'or if not'. It can go at the beginning or end of the sentence.
    If you hadn't given us directions, we wouldn't have found the house.
    *Thanks for your directions to the house. We wouldn't have found it **otherwise.***

3

- *But for*

  This can replace *if not.* It is used in formal language, and must be followed by a noun form.

  If you hadn't helped us, we would have been in trouble.

  But for your help, we would have been in trouble.

- *If so/if not*

  These can refer to a sentence understood but not stated.

  There is a possibility that Jack will be late. If so, I will take his place.

- Colloquial omission of *if*

  An imperative can be used instead of an *if* clause in everyday speech.

  Sit down, and I'll make us a cup of tea. (If you sit down ...)

- *If and* adjectives

  In expressions such as *if it is necessary/possible* it is possible to omit the verb *be.*

  If interested, apply within.

  If necessary, take a taxi.

- Formally if can mean *although,* usually as *if+* adjective.

  The room was well-furnished, if a little badly decorated.

Practice

1   Put each verb in brackets into an appropriate verb form.

a) Now we're lost! If you *had written down* .... (write down)
   Marys directions, this ....(not/happen).

b) Why don't we emigrate? If we ....(live) in
   Australia, at least the weather ....(be) better!

c) I'm afraid that Smith is a hardened criminal. If we
   ....(not/punish) him this time, he
   ....(only/commit) more crimes.

d) Thanks to Dr Jones, I'm still alive! If it ....
   (not/be) for her, I ....(be) dead for certain.

e) I'm sorry I can't lend you any money. You know that if I
   ....(have) it, I
   ....(lend) it to you.

f) Don't be afraid. If you ....(touch) the dog,
   it ....(not/bite).

g) In those days, if you ....(have) a job, you
   ....(be) lucky.

h) It's always the same! If I ....(decide) to
   leave the office early, my boss ....(call)
   me after I've left!

i) What a terrible thing to happen! Just think, if we
   ....(not/miss) the plane, we
   ....(kill) in the crash.

j) Did you enjoy your meal? If you ....(finish)
   eating, I ....(clear away) the plates.

2   Decide whether each sentence is grammatically possible or not.

a) If you haven't received a letter yet, you haven't got the job. *possible*
b) If it isn't for David, we are missing the bus ....
c) If it's raining, we go to the pub on the corner instead ....
d) If you didn't lend us the money, we would have gone to the bank ....
e) If you should happen to change your mind, drop me a line ....
f) If it wasn't for the rain, we would have been home by now ....
g) If you will drive so fast, no wonder the police keep stopping you ....
h) If I knew you were coming, I would have met you at the airport ....
i) But for you helped us, we would have taken much longer ....
j) If Jack joins the team, I'm leaving ....

5

3 **Finish the sentences by ticking the correct option (a-c).**

1) If you'd told me you were coming
   a) I can get some food in.
   b) I'd have found us something to eat. ✓
   c) I made a lovely dish.

2) If you're too ill to come
   a) I'll come over and see you.
   b) I wouldn't have done all this for you.
   c) I asked someone else.

3) If I'd known you weren't coming
   a) I wouldn't be very upset.
   b) I would like to know why.
   c) I wouldn't have gone to so much trouble.

4) If you're not coming
   a) perhaps you'd have the courtesy to tell me.
   b) we'd never have met.
   c) you'd be so lucky.

5) If only you'd come
   a) I'll be the happiest girl alive.
   b) I'd have had a lovely time.
   c) I would look forward to it.

6) If you do decide to come
   a) the party's always a success.
   b) I won't be coming either.
   c) let me know.

7) If you really don't want to come
   a) I'll understand.
   b) I can't be sure.
   c) tell me tomorrow.

4 **Complete each sentence with a phrase containing the verb in brackets in an appropriate form.**

a) If I were _to say I_ (say) loved you, what would you do?

b) If it ....(rain) I would have gone out for a walk.

c) If you'd told me it was a surprise party, I...........................(say) anything to Uncle Dave!

d) Thanks for your help with the garden; I...........................(do) otherwise.

e) If only Mick had come to the disco, then we..........................(have) a great time!

f)..........................(pay) the phone bill today, the phone will be cut off.

g) If I..........................(had) your tools, I wouldn't have been able to fix the car.

h) Those wires look a bit dangerous;..........................(touch) if I were you.

i) If..........................(be) the goalkeeper's heroics, we would have lost the match.

5 **Rewrite each sentence three times so that it contains the word in capitals.**

a) We won't go away if the weather is bad.

We'll go away unless the weather's bad. UNLESS

....ONLY

....STAY

b) If you hurry up you won't be late.

....DON'T

....OR

....WANT

c) If they offered you the job, would you accept?

....WERE TO

....SHOULD

....HAPPENED

d) Without your help, I would have given up years ago.

....HADN'T BEEN

....BUT

....HADN'T HELPED

e) I'll lend you the money on condition that you pay it back next week.

....PROVIDED

....LONG

....ONLY

O **Complete the text by writing one word in each space.**

Mr Jeffries, I have decided against a prison sentence in your case. You may walk free from this court on (1) *condition* .... that you report to Chesham police station every Friday for the next six months. Should you fail to (2)............................so, you will be given one warning; and if you persist (3)............................failing to meet this obligation, you will return to this court for a harsher sentence. (4)............................you can present good reason why you were unable to report to the station, you will (5)............................yourself in severe trouble. If you are (6)............................to attend because of illness, please note that a medical certificate must be produced, signed by your doctor, proving your state of health. You should realise that (7)............................for your previous good conduct, I would (8)............................had no hesitation in imposing a prison sentence. And I shall not forget that if your friend had (9)............................ intervened in the fight, you might (10)............................seriously injured the defendant.

7

7 **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.**

a) I didn't have the money so I didn't buy a new suit.

would

If I *had had the money I would have bought* .... a new suit.

b) If you are in London by any chance, come and see me.

happen

If you...come and see me.

c) If you insist on doing everything yourself, of course you'll feel tired!

will

If you..., of course you'll feel tired!

d) Please take a seat, and I'll inquire for you.

will

If you.., I'll inquire for you.

e) If you do the shopping, I'll cook lunch.

and

You..I'll cook lunch.

f) If Pauline hadn't been interested, the project would have been abandoned.

interest

But..the project would have been abandoned.

g) The fire was brought under control thanks to the night-watchman.

for

If it hadn't..got out of control.

h) Dick is in prison because a detective recognised him.

if

Dick wouldn't..recognised him.

i) I am not tall enough to reach the shelf.

taller

If I...reach the shelf.

j) But for Helen acting so wonderfully, the play would be a flop.

wonderful

If it..the play would be a flop.

k) It won't make any difference if City score first; United will still win.

even

United...City score first.

l) Getting up early makes me feel hungry.

get

If...makes me feel hungry.

8

8   **Using the notes as a guide, complete the letter. Use one or two words in each space. The words you need do not occur in the notes.**

YELLOW BRICK ROAD RECORD COMPANY
MEMO
Brian, tell Carter's again that their account must be paid.
If they don't pay in ten days we're going to have to go to the law.
If they're in financial trouble, they can get in touch with our Finance Dept.
If they pay up we can keep their account open.
If they don't we shall, if we really have to, close their account.
If they have settled the account already, say sorry for this letter.

Credit Controller
Carter's Record Store

Dear Sir/Madam,

We would like to (1) ..*remind*.............. you that your account is two months overdue. On the basis of our goodwill, we are prepared to allow you another ten days to settle your account. However, if you (2)...to pay your outstanding bills within ten days you (3).. us with no alternative but to take legal action. That is,
(4)...we receive full payment by 20 March, we
(5)...steps to reclaim our money, plus compensation costs.
(6)...you be experiencing financial difficulties, please contact our Finance Department. (7)...that you settle your account within the specified time period, we
(8)...happy to continue to do business with you.
However, we will, if (9)..., take the regrettable step of closing your account. We are sorry that the situation has come to this, but if you had paid your bills over the last two months, we would not be in this position now.
You (10)...have settled your account in the last two days; if so, please accept our apologies for this letter.

Yours faithfully,
Brian Eccles
Customer Services
Yellow Brick Road Record Company

→ SEE ALSO

Grammar 9: Unreal time
Grammar 10: Consolidation 2
Grammar 13: Inversion

Subjunctives and Unreal Past; conditionals

Entry test

1 For each of the following pairs of sentences, decide a) if both are correct or only one, and b) if they are both correct, do they mean the same?
EXAMPLE: If he had agreed, we'd start now.
If he were to agree, we'd start now.
Both correct; different meaning (one past reference, one future reference)

a Police are demanding that all cars are searched.
Police are demanding that all cars be searched.

b Come what may, we'll still go out tonight.
Be that as it may, we'll still go out tonight.

c I'd rather you didn't speak to him like that.
I'd rather you hadn't spoken to him like that.

d Had I got on that plane, I would have been killed.
If I got on that plane, I would have been killed.

e It's getting late: it's time I wasn't here.
It's getting late, it's time I left.

SCORE _____

FOR SUBJUNCTIVES AND UNREAL PAST, SEE SECTION 1.

2 In each of the following sentences fill the three gaps with one of the words given. You can use some words more than once. Some words you do not need at all.

long forgotten had will get weren't better provided drive have are run must

a As .... as we .... there early enough, we .... get good seats.

b If we .... leaving, I'd .... my coat.

c .... we don't .... into heavy traffic, we .... see you at seven.

d If those .... Marion's keys, she .... have .... them.

e If you .... so fast it's not surprising you .... an accident.

SCORE _____

FOR LIKELY CONDITIONALS, SEE SECTION 2.

3 Complete each of the following sentences in such a way that it is as similar in meaning as possible to the sentence before it.

a It's lucky I know you or I'd be deeply offended.
If .... I'd be deeply offended.

b Fortunately, they're on e-mail, otherwise they'd never have received the news in time.
Were .... they'd never have received the news in time.

c Could you hold my briefcase so I can move this table?
If you would be .... move this table.

d They may change their minds, in which case they'll let us know.
Should .... they'll let us know.

e I don't think we will, but if we did sell this flat, how much do you think we'd get?
Were .... how much do you think we'd get?

SCORE _____

FOR UNLIKELY CONDITIONALS IN THE PRESENT AND FUTURE, SEE SECTION 3.

4 Fill each of the gaps with a suitable word or phrase.

a Even if you .... help you, I don't think I would have been able to.

b I .... up so early this morning if I'd known you weren't coming until after lunch.

c If you'd known then what you know now, ... done?

d Had .... your timely intervention, they'd have given nearly all their money to that con man.

e If only .... to my father's advice, I'd be a successful lawyer by now.

SCORE _____

FOR PAST CONDITIONALS, SEE SECTION 4.

TOTAL SCORE _____

THE BASICS

1 SUBJUNCTIVES

The subjunctive has limited uses in English.
- The Present subjunctive consists of the infinitive without *to* in all persons (see Section 1.1):
  *I suggest he **stop** as soon as he becomes tired.*
- The Past subjunctive exists only in *were* in all persons – *I were, he were, we were*, etc. (see Section 1.2):
  *She'd do it if she **weren't** so shy.* (= but she is)

2 UNREAL PAST TENSES

Unreal Past tenses, like the Past subjunctive, are used especially to talk about impossible, unlikely or hypothetical conditions. We use a Past Simple form to talk about the present and future, and a Past Perfect form to talk about the past:
  *I wish he **wasn't** so shy.* (= but he is)
  *If only I **hadn't listened** to you.* (= but I did)

3 ZERO, FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD CONDITIONALS

We commonly express a condition using an *if*-clause with a main clause. Conditional sentences are often categorised as:

Zero   Present + Present
  *If you **press** this button, the engine **stops**.*
First   Present + *will*
  *If she **rings** this evening, I'll let you **know**.*
Second Past + *would*
  *What **would** you **do** if you **became** President?*
Third   Past Perfect + *would have*
  *If I **hadn't seen** her, she'd **have drowned**.*

Note: the Past and Past Perfect in Second and Third conditionals are 'Unreal' Pasts.

- **These are useful patterns to learn when studying conditionals, but they are not the only patterns. In this Unit, conditionals are categorised as:**

4 REAL AND UNREAL CONDITIONALS

Real conditionals use normal tenses. They refer to things we think are true or likely. They include 'Zero' and 'First' conditionals:
  *If **you were working** late last night, how come I didn't see your light on?* (= past) *If **you feel** disappointed, that's natural.* (= present) *If **you do** that again, I'm going to tell mum.* (= future)

Unreal conditionals use Unreal Past tenses. They refer to things we think are untrue or unlikely. They include 'Second' and 'Third' conditionals:
  *It would be easier if **Leeds were** on a direct rail link to Oxford.* (= present) *If **you were going to travel** to Tibet, when would be the best time to go?* (= future) *If **I'd listened** more carefully to his directions, I wouldn't have got lost.* (= past)

5 FALSE CONDITIONALS

Included in real conditionals are what we call false conditionals. These are called 'false' because the speaker knows that the condition has already been fulfilled (see Section 2.5):
  *If **you don't like** opera, why are you here?*
  *If **you didn't like** the film, you should have left.*
  *It's locked. Well if **that's the case** we'll have to go round the back.*

6 ALTERNATIVES TO IF

If is not the only word we can use to introduce conditionals:
So / As long as you promise not to tell, you can come too. *You can drive this car **provided / providing (that)** you're fully insured.* ***Suppose / Supposing** something goes wrong, what then?* *I think I'll accept it, **assuming** the offer's still there.* *Mario can't come with us, **even if** he is your best friend.* *If only we'd got there sooner, the accident would never have happened.* *You can come in **on condition that** you don't stay long.* ***Unless** Peter changes his attitude, he's going to find himself in trouble.* *We'll buy it **if and when** our income improves.*

watch out!

- *Unless* is close in meaning to 'if ... not'. We can't always use it as an alternative to *if not*:
  ✗ *I'd feel happier unless she talked so much.*
  ✓ *I'd feel happier if she didn't talk so much.*
- We often use *if only* without a result clause:
  If only we'd got there sooner!

When and if

These words are similar in some languages but very different in English:
  If Sally comes this evening, we'll talk it over with her. (= she may come)
  When Sally comes this evening, we'll talk it over with her. (= she is coming)

SECTION I

Subjunctives and Unreal Past

1 PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE

Present subjunctive (see The Basics) used mainly in certain fixed phrases and in formal, impersonal English. In more informal language we commonly use the Present Simple or *should*. (The examples below give all the alternative forms.)

We use Present subjunctive:

*   in *that*-clauses after report verbs, adjectives or nouns to express plans, urgency, intentions or suggestions:
    The police insisted the car (should) be moved immediately.   The police insist the car is / be moved immediately.

    Words often followed by a Present subjunctive are:
    Verbs: *insist, suggest, request, order, recommend, propose, think*
    Adjectives: *advisable, essential, desirable, preferable*
    Nouns: *decision, insistence, demand, requirement, condition*
*   after *if* (see section 3.4): *If he (should) be found / is found guilty, he'll be jailed for ten years.*
*   after *whether*: *Whether she (should) agree / agrees or not, we're going to have to go ahead.*
*   after *whatever*: *Whatever his reasons be / are, they are insufficient to excuse him.*
*   The Present subjunctive is common in particular phrases:
    Far be it from me...   So be it.   Be that as it may...
    Suffice it to say...   Come what may...
    Heaven forbid!   Long live the Queen.

2 PAST SUBJUNCTIVE

We use the Past subjunctive (*were* in all persons) in formal English. Its meaning is similar to Unreal Past:
If the minister were here, he would no doubt refute the allegations. (= formal)

*   However, it's more common to use *was* and *were* in their usual ways:
    I wish he wasn't such a bighead. (= informal)
*   *Were* is common only in the phrase *if I were you*, and in the formal conditional pattern *were + subject + infinitive*:
    I wouldn't argue with her if I were you.
    Were the vote to go against me, I'd resign.

3 UNREAL PAST

We use Unreal Past or Past subjunctive to discuss imaginary situations, to express impossible wishes, and to make proposals and polite requests:

*   after *if* when we think it is unlikely or impossible that the condition will be fulfilled:
    If she were to eat / ate fish more often, she might get to like it.
*   to replace an *if*-clause when we imagine past, present or future events being different:
    Had he agreed, he'd have become the team captain.
    Were he to agree, he'd probably become the next coach.
*   after *if only* to express regrets and frustration:
    If only he were / was more adventurous.
    If only I hadn't drunk so much coffee! (= but I did)
*   after *wish* when we are wishing for the virtually impossible. For more reasonable wishes, we commonly use *would* or *could*:
    I wish I weren't / wasn't having the injection tomorrow. (= but I am)   I wish I'd listened to you. (= but I didn't)   I wish you wouldn't shout all the time.
*   after *would rather* and *would sooner* to express preferences:
    Do you mean you'd sooner I weren't / wasn't here?
    I'd rather you hadn't spoken so rudely to him.
*   After *as if* and *as though* we use Present and Present Perfect forms to suggest something is likely to be true. Unreal Past suggests it is unlikely or untrue:
    The man speaks as if he has / had never heard of the place.   He acts as though he owns / owned the place.
*   after imperative *suppose* and *imagine* (Present tense is also possible):
    Imagine he were to tell you / told you / tells you his most personal secrets.   Suppose she were to have followed / had followed your advice. (= but she didn't)
*   after *it's time...*:
    It's time I wasn't here. (Past subjunctive is not possible)
    It's time we left. / It's time to leave.

? check

Which sentence does not contain a Present or Past subjunctive, or Unreal Past tense?

1   I propose that this street be closed to cars.
2   If I was in his shoes, I'd give up.
3   I'm suggesting that he reconsider my proposals.
4   Imagine you are going to fall asleep.
5   You talk as if you really meant it.

Practice

1 **Add one of these common phrases to each of the sentences.**

come what may   *suffice it to say*
be that as it may   *God forbid*
so be it   *far be it from me*

1 If, ... , you were to die, who'd run the business?
2 I don't want to explain. .... Aunt Sarah is coming to stay after all.
3 If you really want to drop out of college, then ....
4 ...., I'm determined to finish decorating my room this weekend.
5 .... to tell you what to do, but you'd be mad to marry him.
6 'This medicine tastes horrible!'
   ' ...., it will cure your cough.'

2 **Fill each of the gaps with one suitable word. (In this exercise, words such as *didn't* and *weren't* count as one word.)**

Example: Imagine we *hadn't* met all those years ago!

1 I can't tell you how much I wish the architect .... here to see the results of his work.
2 It's time you .... able to take full responsibility for your own actions.
3 If he .... so self-righteous, he'd realise he was wrong.
4 Imagine you .... completely blind: how would it affect your life?
5 He looked for all the world as though he .... been sleeping in his clothes.
6 I really wish I .... always in so much of a hurry these days.
7 If only she .... so impossibly beautiful!
8 I'd rather you .... talk so loudly, if you don't mind.

3 **Fill each of the numbered blanks in the passages with one word.**

a

Thank you for your e-mail. I agree that it is essential you be fully (1) ....
with the facts of the case. They are as follows. It was agreed six months ago that, come what (2) ...., the above residence (3) .... decorated inside and out before the end of June. This has not happened and my solicitor has recommended I (4) .... with legal action forthwith.

May I suggest that you (5) .... me as a matter of some urgency.

b

Just (1) .... you (2) .... not eaten for a week or two and (3) .... absolutely starving and the only food that (4) .... available to you was a trapped rat that you (5) .... no way of cooking, would you be tempted?

c

Dear Maria,
I'm afraid I've got some bad news. I know we agreed it was advisable that Stavros (1) .... the summer holidays with you. Unfortunately my parents have changed their minds and are now insisting he (2) .... to Athens to stay with Aunt Sotiria. (3) .... it to say, they are not allowing any discussion! Athens it is, although he really wishes he (4) .... at least share the period between you and his aunt. Dimos is going to England for the summer. If only life (5) .... so simple for all of us.

4 **Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given.** **CPE**
Do not change the word given. **Use between** three **and eight words, including the word given.**

Example: The management want to suspend you without pay.
preference
The management's *preference is that you* be suspended without pay.

1 Our neighbour talks as if he owned half the county, doesn't he?
   think
   To hear our neighbour .... county, wouldn't you?
2 What would you do if you couldn't look after yourself?
   incapable
   Suppose you .... yourself, what would you do?
3 It is essential that you tell us everything.
   importance
   It is of the .... be kept fully informed.
4 If they reject her appeal, she'll lose all her insurance claims.
   down
   Should her appeal .... lose all her insurance claims.
5 Are you saying you don't want me here?
   sooner
   Are you saying .... here?

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SECTION 2

Real conditionals in the past, present and future

1 VERB FORMS IN THE *IF*-CLAUSE

Present or future

To talk about conditions in the present or future that we think are likely to happen, we use Present tenses or modals. This is the most common form of conditional sentence:

> *If he **comes** into the room, don't mention the party this evening.   Can I leave early today? If you **must**.*

- To talk about the future, we can also use *be going to* in the *if*-clause.
  > *Even if we're **not going to go** swimming, we'd still better take a towel.*
- *Can* for ability is also common in *if*-clauses:
  > *Assuming you **can leave** work early, we'll be able to make the 6.30 performance.*

Past

To talk about events in the past, we can use Present Perfect or Past Simple / Continuous. This suggests that either we are not sure if something happened, or we are assuming it did and want to draw a conclusion from it (see The Basics for false conditionals, and see Section 4 for unreal conditionals in the past):

> *If he's **read** that report, he'll know what all the fuss is about.*
> *If you've **been telling** the truth, we need to act quickly.*
> *Provided that she **caught** her flight, she'll be landing any moment now.*

2 WILL / WON'T IN THE *IF*-CLAUSE

We sometimes use *will* and *won't* in the *if*-clause with the meanings of refusal (*won't*), polite request (*will*), or to express annoyance at someone's insistence on doing something (*will*):

> *If he **won't go**, there is nothing you can do about it.* (= refusal)
> *If you'**ll hold** this end, I'll take the other one.* (= request)
> *If you **will drive** so fast, you must expect to have accidents.* (= insistence)

3 VERB FORMS IN THE MAIN CLAUSE

Verb forms in the main clause follow the normal rules for tense and modal use. Some of the most common are:

Present Simple	to indicate certainty of the result: *If you mix blue and red, you **get** purple.*
will	to predict future events, make promises, etc: *Provided I see him, I'**ll tell** him.*
will have	to predict what will have already happened: *The train **will have left** if we don't hurry.*
can	to express ability, permission, etc: *You **can do** it that way if you like, but I wouldn't recommend it.*
be going to	for predictions or intentions: *If you do that again, I'**m going to leave**.*

4 MIXING TIME REFERENCES

It is sometimes possible to have an *if*-clause referring to the present or future, and a main clause referring to the past, especially with *must have* and *can't have* for deductions:

> *If he's here already, he **must have set off** very early.*

5 FALSE CONDITIONALS

False conditionals (see The Basics) often mix time references:

> *I don't eat red meat. Well, if that's a problem we'll **have to find** another restaurant.*

? check

Tick (✓) the sentence that is incorrect.

1. We'd better get ready if he's coming round soon.
2. If I have to, I'm going to tell him what I think of him.
3. If the film will be uninteresting, we can leave before the end.
4. If you don't understand, why didn't you ask me?
5. If you'll just wait a moment, I'll see if he's in.

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Practice

1 In each of the following sentences, cross out any of the underlined verb forms that we cannot use.

1 If you <u>leave</u> / <u>will leave</u> your things lying around, you shouldn't be surprised if you <u>lose</u> / <u>will lose</u> them.
2 If you <u>wait</u> / <u>will wait</u> here a moment, I'll tell Mr Brown you're here – assuming he<u>'s</u> / <u>will be</u> in.
3 If you <u>trust</u> / <u>will trust</u> me, I <u>take</u> / <u>will take</u> the money to him, providing you <u>have</u> / <u>will have</u> it with you now.
4 If the unit <u>fits</u> / <u>will fit</u> in the corner there, I think it <u>is</u> / <u>will be</u> the best place, unless you <u>can</u> / <u>will</u> think of anywhere else.
5 If you <u>help</u> / <u>will help</u> me work out whether we need to make another order at the moment, I <u>spend</u> / <u>will spend</u> some time tomorrow helping you with your statistics, if you <u>like</u> / <u>will like</u>.

2 Either two or all three of the main clauses (a–c) can complete the sentences (1–6). Put a cross (✗) next to those that cannot.

1 Do that again and
    a I'm leaving.
    b I can't help you.
    c you would be sorry.

2 Assuming you're going to see him,
    a tell him about the meeting.
    b will you give him a message from me?
    c he can't be a complete recluse.

3 If the boss is feeling relaxed,
    a we all feel the same way.
    b the inspection will go all right.
    c it would be a bad sign.

4 If Paul's been to Australia,
    a he'll probably have acquired an accent.
    b I think you should go there.
    c he would certainly go to New Zealand.

5 If you're still not sure,
    a you hadn't been following.
    b you can't have been concentrating.
    c it's clear you weren't listening.

6 If you will gossip about other people,
    a you've got to expect people to gossip about you.
    b people are gossiping about you.
    c you can't expect others not to gossip about you.

3 Match the beginnings (1–8) with the second halves (a–h) to make complete sentences.

1 If you've seen it,   a it can't be as bad as that.
2 If you enjoyed it so much,   b how come you know how it ends.
3 If you don't want to see it,   c why were you asleep at the end?
4 If you haven't seen it,   d I'm not sure I would.
5 If it was that bad,   e why don't you remember who's in it?
6 If it won all those awards,   f you must have heard something bad about it.
7 If you like slapstick comedy,   g why didn't you walk out?
8 Even if you enjoyed it,   h this is the film for you.

4 Complete the **CPE** second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. Use **between** three **and** eight words, including the word given.

1 Assuming everything goes according to plan, we'll be there by six o'clock.
wrong
Unless .... later than six o'clock.

2 The Finn is almost certain to win, unless his engine blows out during the race.
lose
The only way the Finn .... a blow-out during the race.

3 Giving him your number suggests you did want to see him again.
desire
Why give him your number .... see him again?

4 There's clearly nothing I can do to stop you leaving.
determined
If .... anything I can do to stop you.

5 You can borrow my car for your holiday if you arrange a service afterwards.
condition
You can borrow my car for your holiday .... serviced afterwards.

6 Your dinner's in the oven.
want
If .... the oven.

7 If you're innocent, what have you got to be afraid of?
wrong
If you .... nothing to fear.

8 If you mean to be as bad-tempered as this all afternoon, there's no point in playing.
going
What's the point .... in this mood all afternoon?

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SECTION 3

Unreal conditionals in the present and future

1 VERB FORMS IN THE IF-CLAUSE

Present

When we talk about unlikely or impossible situations in the present, we use Past subjunctive or Unreal Past (see Section 1) in the if-clause to indicate that the opposite is true:

> If I **didn't know** you so well, I'd say you were lying.
> (= but I do know you well)
> If only he **weren't** so stubborn, he'd agree with us.
> (= but he is stubborn)

Future

When talking about the future, we use an Unreal Past tense in the if-clause to indicate that we are talking hypothetically and think the condition is unlikely to be fulfilled:

> If you **told** him, he'd never believe you. (= I don't think you will tell him)
> Suppose your car **broke down**, what would you do?

2 VERB FORMS IN THE MAIN CLAUSE

We commonly use would and could in the main clause when there is an Unreal Past or Past subjunctive in the if-clause:

> If I weren't so busy, I'd take a long holiday.
> If you lent me £10, I **could buy** it today.

- We also use might:
> She **might stay** longer if you asked her nicely.

3 WOULD IN IF-CLAUSES

We use would and wouldn't in if-clauses for polite requests and to express strong wishes that someone would do something:

> If you **would** be kind enough to lend me a hand, we could finish this very quickly.   If you **would** just calm down for a moment, you'd see what I'm talking about.

watch out!

We don't use would in if-clauses to indicate simple future:

> ✗ ~~I think you'd be mad if you would give up your job.~~
> ✓ I think you'd be mad if you **gave** up your job.

4 SHOULD IN IF-CLAUSES

We can use should in if-clauses instead of a Present or Unreal Past (see Section 1.1). It suggests that the condition is possible but unlikely. We use will or would or other modals in the main clause:

> If they **should** agree the contract, we'd have to work twice as hard.

- This structure is formal and roughly equivalent to the phrase by any chance:
> If **by any chance** they do turn up, we'd better tell them what happened.

- In more formal contexts we can also omit if or other conditional words and start the sentence with Should:
> **Should** you change your mind, please let me know.

5 IF ... ARE TO/WERE TO

We use be to in a fairly formal way to express conditions. It suggests that the speaker has no influence over whether the condition will be fulfilled or not. Are to, am to and is to suggest the condition may be fulfilled. Were to (or, informally, was to) emphasises that the condition is very unlikely:

> If we **are to** get rid of him, who will tell him?
> Supposing you **were to** win the lottery, how would you spend the money?

- We can omit if or other conditional words and start the sentence with Were:
> **Were** we to take on more staff, how could we afford to pay them?
> This is not possible with are.

? check

Which of the following sentences refer to conditions in the present, and which to the future?

		present	future
1	If you asked him nicely, he'd let you have the day off.	☐	☐
2	If you were a bit more considerate, you'd offer me a seat.	☐	☐
3	Should you change your job, what would you do?	☐	☐
4	If I were to say what I really think, I'd upset a lot of people.	☐	☐
5	If I thought he was dishonest, I wouldn't have offered him the job.	☐	☐

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Practice

1 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the new beginning and the two other prompt words. Do not change the given words.

Example: I don't know if we're late because I don't have a watch.
If *I had a watch, I'd know whether we were late.*
had/whether

1 I think you should formally complain to the manager.
If .... were/complaint

2 Supposing we do go ahead with the building, it can't be before June.
If we are .... will/earliest

3 Should anything happen to make you change your mind, let me know.
If by .... chance/might

4 Supposing the world was going to end tomorrow, what would you do tonight?
Were the world .... about/spend

5 I think not having school on Mondays sounds like quite a good idea.
I think it .... might/better

6 Nico's useless at maths so he can't become an accountant.
Were .... better/able

2 Fill each of the blanks with a suitable word or phrase.

1 If this scheme .... ground, everyone will have to pull their weight.
2 Your brakes are making an odd noise; I .... to if I were you.
3 Supposing someone told you that you weren't fit to do your job, ... react?
4 Considering his age and the seriousness of the operation, it would be a .... survived it.
5 Should you ever .... of a helping hand, remember where I am.
6 If that wisdom tooth is giving you trouble, I .... out.
7 If by any .... into Mrs Hebden while you're out, could you give her this note?
8 If we .... Friday deadline, some overtime may be necessary.

Imagine you were to win the lottery – what **would** you do?

3 Match a sentence from the left (1–8) with a response on the right (a–h).

Example: 9 + i
(9 Would it be all right if we sat here?)

1 Would you mind if they came along?
2 Would you like me to give you a hand?
3 Do you feel it might be best if I said yes?
4 Could you let me know if you change your mind?
5 You'd feel better if you got some fresh air.
6 Don't you think it's time we were leaving?
7 Do you reckon he'll leave?
8 I would if I could, you know.

(i Yes, please do.)
a If only he would.
b I suppose it is.
c Of course I will.
d I'd rather they didn't.
e I think it would.
f I'm sure you would.
g Perhaps I would.
h Oh, if you would.

4 Fill each of the numbered blanks with one suitable word. **CPE/CAE**

In accordance with your recent request, we are pleased to supply the following reference. Miss Baiocci (1) ...., I am sure, be a real asset to your organisation, knowing as she does a great deal about the way a company such as yours operates. There are very few duties here that I could (2) .... confidently entrust her with, and if she were (3) .... join you, you (4) .... soon come to (5) .... her organisational and interpersonal skills. If it (6) .... not clear that she (7) .... determined to move away from this area, we would (8) .... everything we (9) .... to keep her here. Assuming we (10) .... to lose her, I (11) .... be happy to know that she (12) .... being taken on by a company with a reputation such as you enjoy. (13) .... any further information be (14) ...., I (15) .... be happy to supply it.

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SECTION 4

Unreal Past conditionals

1 VERB FORMS IN THE *IF*-CLAUSE

We use an Unreal Past Perfect in the *if*-clause when we are thinking about how things might have been different. This is sometimes called the 'Third' conditional:

> *If she'd **known** my number, she would have phoned.* (= but she didn't know it)
> *If I **hadn't been standing** outside the supermarket, we might never have met.*

- We can omit *if* and start with *Had*:
  > *Had I **believed** her for one moment, I wouldn't have refused to help.*

- Sometimes, we can talk about something that is generally true, now and in the past, but which had results only in the past. We use tenses like this:
  > *If I **wasn't** / **weren't** such an idiot, I wouldn't have done that.*

If it hadn't been for...

This phrase means 'without her, your, etc. help, interference, etc.':

> *If it **hadn't been for** you, we'd never have got there on time.* *Had it **not been for** Wagner, modern classical music would sound very different.*

We can use the phrase *If it weren't / wasn't for...* to refer to the present, though if the time reference is clear, it can occasionally refer to the past:

> *If it **wasn't for** the parking problem, I'd drive to work.* *If it **wasn't for** / **hadn't been for** those delays on the motorway we'd never have missed the wedding.*

Were

In formal English we can use conditional structures beginning with *Were* + Perfect infinitive:

> *Were you **to have stopped** and **considered**, you'd have seen the error of your ways.*

2 VERB FORMS IN THE MAIN CLAUSE

For Past conditionals that have results in the past, we use modal Perfects (*would / could / might have*, etc.) in the main clause:

> *Had you told me earlier, I **could have done** something about it.*

- For Past conditionals that have results in the present or future, we commonly use *would*, *could* or *might*:

> *If you'd listened more carefully to his directions, you **wouldn't be** lost now.*
> *If only I'd entered politics earlier, I **could be** Prime Minister now.*
> *If you were in the area, why **didn't you come** and visit?*

3 *WOULD HAVE ... WOULD HAVE*

The use of *would have* in both *if*-clause and main clause is becoming very common in spoken and even written English. It's still considered incorrect by some people:

> *If I'**d have known** how expensive it was, I **wouldn't have gone.***

> **watch out!**
>
> It's sometimes difficult to hear Past conditionals spoken at speed because of short forms:
> > *I'**d've** come at once if only you'd rung me.*

4 PAST CONDITIONALS WITHOUT CONDITIONAL WORDS

We often use a Past conditional structure without using a conventional 'conditional word' like *if* or *unless*. The condition is understood: 'if things had been different':

> *But for your help, we'd never have managed.*
> *We'd have been completely lost without you.*
> *You should have come – you'd have loved it.*
> *The film would have been just as effective in black and white.*

> **? check**

Tick (✓) the sentence that has both an *if*-clause and a main clause which refer to the past.

1 If I wasn't so tired all the time, I wouldn't have made such an elementary mistake.
2 If you had driven faster, we'd be there by now.
3 I'd have rung you if I'd known you were at home.
4 I wouldn't be going to London if you hadn't told me about the exhibition.
5 If you were right about the weather, we're going to get wet.

Practice

1 For each of the following sentences, say whether a or b, or both, can complete the sentence. Tick (✓) any that we can use, put a cross (✗) for any that we cannot use.

Example: If President Kennedy hadn't been assassinated in 1963,
a the Cold War might have ended sooner. ✓
b America will be very different. ✗

1	If it hadn't been for the awful weather,	a	we'd have spent more time sailing.
		b	we would go there again.
2	If I'd realised you weren't coming,	a	I wouldn't be so angry.
		b	I can do something.
3	If he had told you the truth,	a	you wouldn't have done what you did.
		b	you wouldn't be in this predicament.
4	If it wasn't for the endless bureaucracy,	a	I'd easily have got permission.
		b	I'd try again.
5	Had they explained their reasons,	a	they're stupid.
		b	you'd understand.

2 Fill each of the blanks with a suitable word or phrase.

Example: If you had been in my shoes, *what would you have* done?
1 If .... for the postal strike, the cheque would have arrived today.
2 In those days you would have been breaking .... ID card on you at all times.
3 Had we .... misinformed about the bus times, we wouldn't have been late.
4 In retrospect you might .... advised to get a lawyer.
5 If Ioannis stayed that long at the party, ... been having a good time.
6 But .... fire alarm alerting us, the building would have gone up in flames.

3 Write sentences that are a part of a chain, as in the examples.

Examples: I cheated from him in the entry test. We finished up in the same class.
If I hadn't cheated from him in the entry test, we wouldn't have finished up in the same class.
We used to do our homework together.
If we hadn't finished up in the same class, we wouldn't have done our homework together.

1 We started to find out quite a lot about each other. (Begin: *If we ... homework together, ...*)
2 We discovered that we had a lot in common.
3 He invited me to go to the National Gallery.
4 We saw the most incredible paintings.
5 I'm a true art-lover now.
6 I went to the National Gallery again yesterday.
7 I met another art-lover there.
8 I'm going out to dinner tonight.
9 I didn't phone you.
10 You haven't warned me yet about going out with art-lovers.

4 Fill each of the numbered blanks in the passage with one word.

'You want a cat? ... All right,' I said, 'on (1) .... that you look after it, (2) .... that you feed it and as (3) .... as you don't expect me to clear up after it.' If (4) .... I had stuck to these conditions! The animal is never fed (5) .... I do it; (6) .... for me, it would (7) .... starved to death months ago. (8) .... I known that the children's interest in the beast would wane as soon as it arrived, I (9) .... have answered differently. The poor thing is ignored by them, (10) .... if it springs on to their laps. (11) .... I to kidnap the thing, I don't think they would take a blind bit of (12) .... I mean, if they were (13) .... going to look after it, why on earth didn't they (14) .... so before? (15) .... the question of a dog ever arise, I think I've got my answer ready.

21 The conditional

The conditional tenses

219   The present conditional tense

A   This is formed with **would/should** + *infinitive* for the first person and **would** + *infinitive* for the other persons.

Affirmative	*I would/I'd work* or *I should work*
	you would/you'd work etc.
Negative	*I would not/wouldn't work* or
	I should not/shouldn't work
	you would not/wouldn't work etc.
Interrogative	*would/should I work?*
	would you work? etc.
Negative interrogative	*should I not/shouldn't I work?*
	would you not/wouldn't you work? etc.

B   It is used:

(a) In conditional sentences (see 221-9).

(b)   In special uses of **would** and **should** (see chapter 22).

(c) As a past equivalent of the future simple, **would/should** must be used instead of **will/shall** when the main verb of the sentence is in the past tense:

I hope (that) I will/shall succeed.

I hoped (that) I would/should succeed.

I know (that) he will be in time.

I knew (that) he would be in time.

He thinks (that) they will give him a visa.

He thought (that) they would give him a visa.

I expect (that) the plane will be diverted.

I expected (that) the plane would be diverted.

(For **will/shall, would/should** in indirect speech, see chapter 31.)

220 The perfect conditional tense

A This is formed with **would/should** and the perfect infinitive

Affirmative	*I would/should have worked*
	you would have worked etc.
Negative	*I would not/should not have worked* etc.
Interrogative	*would/should I have worked?* etc.
Negative	*should I not have/shouldn't I have worked*
interrogative	*would you not have/wouldn't you have worked?* etc.

Other contractions as in 219.

B It is used:

(a) In conditional sentences (see 221-9).

(b) In special uses of **would** and **should** (see 230-7). (c) As a past equivalent of the future perfect tense:

> *I hope he will have finished before we get back.*
>
> *I hoped he would have finished before we got back.*

Conditional sentences

Conditional sentences have two parts: the **if**-clause and the main clause. In the sentence *If it rains I shall stay at home* 'If it rains' is the **if**-clause, and 'I shall stay at home' is the main clause. There are three kinds of conditional sentences. Each kind contains a different pair of tenses. With each type certain variations are possible but students who are studying the conditional for the first time should ignore these and concentrate on the basic forms.

221 Conditional sentences type 1: probable

A The verb in the **if**-clause is in the present tense; the verb in the main clause is in the future simple. It doesn't matter which comes first.

> *If he runs he'll get there in time.*
>
> *The cat will scratch you if you pull her tail.*

This type of sentence implies that the action in the **if**-clause is quite probable.

Note that the meaning here is present or future, but the verb in the **if**-clause is in a present, not a future tense, **if** + **will/would** is only possible with certain special meanings. (See 224.)

B Possible variations of the basic form

1   Variations of the main clause

Instead of **if** + *present* + *future*, we may have:

(a)   **if** + *present* + **may/might** (possibility)

   If the fog gets thicker the plane may/might be diverted. (Perhaps the plane will be diverted.)

(b)   **if** + *present* + **may** (permission) or **can** (permission or ability)

   If your documents are in order you may/can leave at once. (permission)

   If it stops snowing we can go out. (permission or ability)

(c)   if + *present* + **must, should** or any expression of command, request or advice

   If you want to lose weight you must/should eat less bread.

   If you want to lose weight you had better eat less bread.

   If you want to lose weight eat less bread.

   If you see Tom tomorrow could you ask him to ring me?

(d)   **if** + *present* + *another* present tense

if + *two present tenses* is used to express automatic or habitual results:

   If you heat ice it turns to water. (will turn is also possible.)

   If there is a shortage of any product prices of that product go up.

(e)   When if is used to mean **as/since** (see 338 A), a variety of tenses can be used in the main clause:

   Ann hates London. ~ If she hates it why does she live there?/she ought to move out. (If so could replace If she hates it here.) This is not, of course, a true conditional clause.

2   Variations of the **if**-clause

Instead of **if** + *present tense*, we can have:

(a)   **if** + *present continuous*, to indicate a present action or a future arrangement

   If you are waiting for a bus (present action) you'd better join the queue.

   If you are looking for Peter (present action) you'll find him upstairs.

   If you are staying for another night (future arrangement) I'll ask the manager to give you a better room.

(b)   **if** + *present perfect*

   If you have finished dinner I'll ask the waiter for the bill.

   If he has written the letter I'll post it.

   If they haven't seen the museum we'd better go there today.

222   Conditional sentences type 2

A   The verb in the **if**-clause is in the past tense; the verb in the main clause is in the conditional tense:

   If I had a map I would lend it to you. (But I haven't a map. The meaning here is present.)

   If someone tried to blackmail me I would tell the police. (But I don't expect that anyone will try to blackmail me. The meaning here is future.)

22

There is no difference in time between the first and second types of conditional sentence. Type **2**, like type **1**, refers to the present or future, and the past tense in the **if**-clause is not a true past but a subjunctive, which indicates unreality (as in the first example above) or improbability (as in the second example above).

B   Type **2** is used:

1   When the supposition is contrary to known facts:

If I lived near my office I'd be in time for work. (But I don't live near my office.)

If I were you I'd plant some trees round the house. (But I am not you.)

When we don't expect the action in the **if**-clause to take place:

If a burglar came into my room at night I'd scream. (But I don't expect a burglar to come in.)

If I dyed my hair blue everyone would laugh at me. (But I don't intend to dye it.)

Some **if**-clauses can have either of the above meanings:

If he left his bicycle outside someone would steal it.

'If he left his bicycle' could imply 'but he doesn't' (present meaning, as in **1** above) or 'but he doesn't intend to' (future meaning, as in **2**). But the correct meaning is usually clear from the text. Ambiguity of this kind can be avoided by using **were/was** + *infinitive* instead of the past tense in type **2**.

if he/she/it were can be used instead of **if he/she/it was,** and is considered the more correct form:

If he were to resign ... = If he resigned ...

If I were to succeed ... = If I succeeded ...

This construction with **were** is chiefly found in fairly formal sentences. **if he/she/it was** + *infinitive* is possible in colloquial English, but the past tense, as shown above, is much more usual.

3   Sometimes, rather confusingly, type **2** can be used as an alternative to type **1** for perfectly possible plans and suggestions:

Will Mary be in time if she gets the ten o'clock bus? ~ No, but she'd be in time if she got the nine-thirty bus
    or

No, but she'll be in time if she gets the nine-thirty bus. We'll never save £100! ~ If we each saved £10 a week we'd do it in ten weeks   or

If we each save £10 a week we'll do it in ten weeks.

A suggestion in type **2** is a little more polite than a suggestion in type **1**, just as **would you** is a more polite request form than **will you.** But the student needn't trouble too much over this use of type **2**.

C   Possible variations of the basic form

1   Variations of the main clause

(a)   **might or could** may be used instead of **would:**

If you tried again you would succeed. (certain result)

If you tried again you might succeed. (possible result)

If I knew her number I could ring her up. (ability)

If he had a permit he could get a job. (ability or permission)

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(b) The continuous 'conditional form may be used instead of the simple conditional form:

> *Peter is on holiday; he is touring Italy. ~ If I were on holiday I would/might be touring Italy too.*

(c)   **if** + *past tense* can be followed by another past tense when we wish to express automatic or habitual reactions in the past: compare **if** + *two present tenses*, 221 B1(d). Note that the past tenses here have a past meaning:

> *If anyone interrupted him he got angry. (whenever anyone interrupted him)*

> *If there was a scarcity of anything prices of that thing went up.*

(d) When **if** is used to mean 'as' or 'since', a variety of tenses is possible in the main clause, **if** + *past tense* here has a past meaning. The sentence is not a true conditional.

> *The pills made him dizzy. All the same he bought/has bought/is buying some more. ~ If they made him dizzy why did he buy/has he bought/is he buying more?*

> *I knew she was short of money. ~ If you knew she was short of money you should have lent her some? why didn't you lend her some?*

2   Variations of the **if**-clause

Instead of **if** + *simple past* we can have:

(a)   **if** + *past continuous*

> *(We're going by air and) I hate flying. If we were going by boat I'd feel much happier.*

> *If my car was working I would/could drive you to the station.*

(b) **if** + *past perfect*

> *If he had taken my advice he would be a rich man now.*

 (This is a mixture of types **2** and **3**. For more examples, see 223.)

(For **if** + **would,** see 224.)

223   Conditional sentences type 3

A   The verb in the **if**-clause is in the past perfect tense; the verb in the main clause is in the perfect conditional. The time is past and the condition cannot be fulfilled because the action in the **if**-clause didn't happen.

> *I'll had known that you were coming I would have met you at the airport. (But I didn't know, so I didn't come.)*

> *If he had tried to leave the country he would have been stopped at the frontier. (But he didn't try.)*

B   Possible variations of the basic form

1   **could or might** may be used instead of **would:**

> *If we had found him earlier we could have saved his life. (ability)*

> *If we had found him earlier we might have saved his life. (possibility)*

> *If our documents had been in order we could have left at once. (ability or permission)*

2   The continuous form of the perfect conditional may be used:

> *At the time of the accident I was sitting in the back of the car, because Tom's little boy was sitting beside him in front. If Tom's boy had not been there I would have been sitting in front.*

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3   We can use the past perfect continuous in the if-clause:

I was wearing a seat belt. If I hadn't been wearing one I'd have been seriously injured.

A combination of types **2** and **3** is possible:

The plane I intended to catch crashed and everyone was killed. If I had caught that plane, I would be dead now   or   *I would have been killed. (type 3)*

If I had worked harder at school I would be sitting in a comfortable office now; I wouldn't be sweeping the streets. (But I didn't work hard at school and now I am sweeping the streets.)

5   **had** can be placed first and the **if** omitted:

If you had obeyed orders this disaster would not have happened   =   *Had you obeyed orders this disaster would not have happened.*

224   Special uses of **will/would** and **should** in if-clauses

Normally these auxiliaries are not used after **if** in conditional sentences. There are, however, certain exceptions.

A   **if you will/would** is often used in polite requests, **would** is the more polite form.

If you will/would wait a moment I'll see if Mr Jones is free. (Please wait.)

I would be very grateful if you would make the arrangements for me.

If you would + *infinitive* is often used alone when the request is one which would normally be made in the circumstances. The speaker assumes that the other person will comply as a matter of course.

If you'd fill up this form.

(in a hotel) If you'd just sign the register.

(in a shop) If you'd put your address on the back of the cheque.

(in a classroom) If you'd open your books.

B   **if** + **will/would** can be used with all persons to indicate willingness:

If he'll listen to me I'll be able to help him. (If he is willing to listen ...)

If Tom would tell me what he wants for his dinner I'd cook it for him. (The speaker implies that Tom is unwilling to tell her.)

won't used in this way can mean 'refuse':

If he won't listen to me I can't help him. (If he is unwilling to listen/If he refuses to listen ...)

If they won't accept a cheque we'll have to pay cash. (If they refuse to accept ...)

C   **will** can be used to express obstinate insistence (230 B):

If you will play the drums all night no wonder the neighbours complain. (If you insist on playing ...)

D   **if** + **would like/care** can be used instead of **if** + **want/wish** and is more polite:

If you would like to come I'll get a ticket for you.

If you'd care to see the photographs Ill bring them round.

If he'd like to leave his car here he can.

But if we rearrange such sentences so that **would like** has no object we can drop the **would:**

> *If you like I'll get a ticket for you*   but
>
> *If you'd like a ticket I'll get one for you.*
>
> *If he likes he can leave his car here*   but
>
> *If he'd like to leave his car here he can*   or
>
> *He can leave it here if he'd like to.*

E **if** + **should** can be used in type **1** to indicate that the action, though possible, is not very likely. It is usually combined with an imperative and is chiefly used in written instructions:

> *If you should have any difficulty in getting spare parts ring this number.*
>
> *If these biscuits should arrive in a damaged condition please inform the factory at once.*

should can be placed first and the **if** omitted:

> *Should these biscuits arrive ... (See 225 B.)*

225   **if** + **were** and inversion of subject and auxiliary

A **if** + **were** instead of **if** + **was**

1 Usually either can be used, **were** being more likely in formal English:

> *If she was/were offered the job she'd take it.*
>
> *If Tom was/were here he'd know what to do.*

2 **But were** is a little more usual than **was** in the advice form *If I were/was you I would/should ...* :

> *'If I were you I would wait a bit,' he said. (See 287 C.)*

were is also more usual in the infinitive construction:

> *If Peter were/was to apply for the post he'd get it. (See 222 B.)*

3 **were,** not was, is used when the auxiliary is placed first:

> *Were I Tom I would refuse. (See B below.)*

When **if** means 'since' (see 222 C) **was** cannot be replaced by **were, were** can replace **was** after if only (see 228) and wish (see 300).

B **if** + *subject* + *auxiliary* can be replaced in formal English by inversion of auxiliary and subject with **if** omitted:

> *If I were in his shoes ... = Were I in his shoes ...*
>
> *If you should require anything ... = Should you require anything. . .*
>
> *If he had known ... = Had he known ...*

226   **if, even if, whether, unless, but for, otherwise, provided, suppose**

A **even if = even though**

Compare:

> *You must go tomorrow if you are ready*   and
>
> *You must go tomorrow even if you aren't ready.*

B   **whether ... or = if ... or**

You must go tomorrow whether you are ready or not.

C   **unless** + *affirmative verb* = **if** + *negative*

Unless you start at once you'll be late = If you don't start at once you'll be late.

Unless you had a permit you couldn't get a job = If you hadn't a permit you couldn't get a job.

Note the difference between:

(a) Don't call me if you need help.   and

(b) Don't call me unless you need help.

In (a) he won't help her even if she needs help.

In (b) he will help her if she needs help but doesn't want non-urgent calls.

unless + **he'd/you'd like/prefer** etc. normally replaces **if he/you wouldn't like** etc.:

I'll ask Tom, unless you'd prefer me to ask/unless you'd rather I asked Bill.

D   **but for** = 'if it were not for/if it hadn't been for'

My father pays my fees. But for that I wouldn't be here.

The car broke down. But for that we would have been in time.

E   **otherwise** = 'if this doesn't happen/didn't happen/hadn't happened'

We must be back before midnight; otherwise we'll be locked out   =   If we are not back by midnight we'll be locked out.

Her father pays her fees; otherwise she wouldn't be here   =   If her father didn't pay her fees she wouldn't be here.

I used my calculator; otherwise I'd have taken longer   =   If I hadn't used my calculator I'd have taken longer.

F   In colloquial English **or** (+ **else**) can often replace **otherwise:** We must be early or (else) we won't get a seat.

G   **provided (that)** can replace if when there is a strong idea of limitation or restriction. It is chiefly used with permission. You can camp here provided you leave no mess.

H   **suppose/supposing ... ? = what if ... ?**

Suppose the plane is late? = What if/What will happen if the plane is late?

Suppose no one had been there? = What if no one had been there?

suppose can also introduce suggestions:

Suppose you ask him/Why don't you ask him?

227   **if** and **in case**

A   **in case** is followed by a present or past tense or by **should** (see 337). It appears similar to if and is often confused with it. But the two are completely different.

An **in case** clause gives a reason for the action in the main clause:

> *Some cyclists carry repair outfits in case they have a puncture = Some cyclists carry repair outfits because they may have/because it i$_s$ possible they will have a puncture.*
>
> *I always slept by the phone in case he rang during the night = I always slept by the phone because (I knew) he might ring during the night.*

An **in case** clause can be dropped without changing the meaning of the main clause. In a conditional sentence, however, the action in the main clause depends on the action in the **if**-clause, and if the **if**-clause is dropped the meaning of the main clause changes. Compare:

> *(a)   BILL: I'll come tomorrow in case Ann wants me*   and
>
> *(b)   TOM: I'll come tomorrow if Ann wants me.*

In (a) perhaps Ann will want Bill, perhaps she won't. But Bill will come anyway. His action doesn't depend on Ann's, *in case Ann wants me* could be omitted without changing the meaning of the main verb. In (b), a conditional sentence, Tom will only come if Ann asks him. His action depends on hers. We cannot remove *if Ann wants me* without changing the meaning of the main verb.

B   **An in case** clause is normally placed after the main clause, not before it. Note, however, that **in case of** + *noun* = **if there is a/an** + *noun*:

> *In case of accident phone 999 = If there is an accident phone 999.*

This may have led to the confusion of if-clauses and **in case** clauses.

228   if only

only can be placed after if and indicates hope, a wish or regret, according to the tense used with it.

A   **if only** + *present tense/will* expresses hope:

> *If only he comes in time = We hope he will come in time.*
>
> *If only he will listen to her = We hope he will be willing to listen to her.*

B   **if only** + *past/past perfect* expresses regret (see also **wish** + *past/past perfect*, 300):

> *If only he didn't smoke! = We wish he didn't smoke*   or   *We are sorry he smokes.*
>
> *If only (= I/We wish) Tom were here!*
>
> *If only you hadn't said, 'Liar'! =We wish you hadn't said, 'Liar'/We are sorry you said, 'Liar'.*

C   **if only** + **would** can express regret about a present action as an alternative to **if only** + *past tense* (it has the same meaning as **wish** + **would):**

> *If only he would drive more slowly! = We are sorry that he isn't willing to drive more slowly*

or a not very hopeful wish concerning the future:

> *If only (= I/We wish) the rain would stop! (We don't really expect it to stop.)*

(See also **wish,** 300-1.)

if only clauses can stand alone as above or form part of a full conditional sentence.

229   Conditional sentences in indirect speech

A   Type **1**, basic form. The tenses here change in the usual way:

He said, 'If I catch the plane I'll be home by five' = He said that if he caught the plane he would be home by five.

Type **2**, basic form. No tense changes:

'If I had a permit I could get a job,' he said = He said that if he had a permit he could get a job.

Type **3**, basic form. No tense changes:

'If she had loved Tom,' he said, 'she wouldn't have left him' = He said that if she had loved Tom she wouldn't have left him.

B   Examples of **if**-*clauses* + *commands* and requests in indirect speech (see also 320-1):

He said, 'If you have time wash the floor'   or

He said, 'If you have time would you wash the floor?' = He told/asked me to wash the floor if I had time (note change of order)   or

He said that if I had time I was to wash the floor.

'If you see Ann ask her to ring me,' he said = He said that if I saw Ann I was to ask her to ring him. (The infinitive construction here would be clumsy and less clear.)

PETER (on phone): If you miss the last bus get a taxi = Peter says that if we miss the last bus we are to get a taxi. (The infinitive construction would be much less usual here.)

(For **if you would ...** requests, see 284 F.)

C   **if**-*clauses* + *expressions* of advice in indirect speech:

'If you feel ill,' she said, 'why don't you go to bed?'   or   *' ... you'd better go to bed' =*   *She advised me to go to bed if I felt ill   or   She said that if I felt ill I'd better/I should go to bed.*

'If I were you I'd stop taking pills,' she said = She advised me to stop taking pills.

D   **if**-*clauses* + *questions* are usually reported with the **if**-clause last:

'If the baby is a girl what will they call her?' he wondered = He wondered what they would call the baby if it was a girl.

'If the door is locked what shall I do?' she asked = She asked what she should/was to do if the door was locked.

- **Unless**

We sometimes use **unless** instead of **if... not** in the sense of **except if**, especially if we are talking about present circumstances and conditions.

The poor man won't be able to buy a new car unless he wins the lottery.
He won't be able to pay all the tax he owes unless he robs a bank.

Unless is well used here because it highlights an exception to what is generally true. It works very well in the following examples too when the focus is on exceptions to the general rule.

Compare the following:

I'll be back by the weekend, unless there's a train strike.
I'll be back by the weekend, if the train drivers aren't on strike.

We'll play tennis on the outdoor courts on Friday, unless it rains in which case we'll play indoors.
We'll play tennis on the outdoor courts on Friday, if it doesn't rain. If it does rain, we'll play indoors.

If we use unless in the above examples, we think it unlikely that there will be a train strike and unlikely that it will rain. Using if…not suggests that there may be a rail strike or that it may rain.

Compare the following and note the contrastive differences in meaning between **if** and **unless**:

Don't phone me if you get into trouble!
Don't phone me unless you get into trouble.

In the first, I am saying that I want nothing more to do with you, that I am disowning you. Don't phone me under any circumstances. In the second, I am saying that you can phone me if you want to, but **only if** you get into trouble.

- **As long as / provided / on condition that / only if**

We can use these alternatives to **if** if we want to emphasize the conditions surrounding the action, i.e. one thing will happen **only if** another thing happens. We can also use **so long as** and **providing (that)** as alternatives to **as long as** and **provided (that)**. **On condition that** is formally very explicit. **Provided / providing** are more formal than **as long as / so long as**.

Compare the following:

We will lend you the money on condition that it is repaid within 12 months.
We will lend you the money provided (that) you can repay it within 12 months.
I don't mind talking to the press, but only if my identity is protected.
You can have the day off today providing you agree to work a double shift tomorrow.
You can borrow my DVD player as long as you return it on Monday.

- **Whether**

In indirect speech, we can use **if** or **whether** to introduce reported yes/no questions:

Can you feed the cat for me while I'm away? - She wanted to know whether I could feed the cat for her while she was away.

Do you have any free time on Sunday? - I'm not sure if I'll have any free time on Sunday.

When there is a choice of **two possibilities**, particularly in a two-part question with or, we normally use **whether**:

Let me know whether you can come or not.
I asked him whether he wanted to stay in a hotel or a B&B.
Whether (or not) he'll be fully fit when the new football season kicks off, we don't yet know.

Compare the following conditional use with **whether**:

I'll come with you to the hospital, if you want me to.
I'm coming with you to the hospital, whether you want me to or not.

In the first, where your friend is talking, there are a number of possibilities: you can go alone, go with a friend, go with your mother, etc, so **if** is used. In the second, where your mother is talking, there are only two possibilities: you either want her with you or not, so **whether** is used.

- **IF and WHEN**

When can replace *if* in zero conditionals:

If you heat water to 100 degrees Celsius, it boils.
When you heat water to 100 degrees Celsius, it boils.

In the other types of conditionals, we cannot use *when* instead of *if*.

- **EVEN IF**

Even if emphasises that something will happen, would happen or would have happened whatever the condition:

Even if we leave right now, we still won't catch the train.
I wouldn't go into the water even if I could swim.
Even if we had booked our flight earlier, it wouldn't have been cheaper.

- **ONLY IF**

Only if makes the condition more restrictive:

Acetaminophen is dangerous to children only if dosage is too high.

If the *if*-clause is first, the subject and the auxiliary in the main clause are inverted:

Only if you like classical music is it worth coming tonight.

- **SO/AS LONG AS, PROVIDING/PROVIDED (THAT)**

So/As long as and *providing/provided (that)* can be used instead of *if* to express a condition. Note that *providing/provided (that)* is a bit formal:

You can stay here as long as you keep quiet.
Provided/Providing (that) the bills are paid, tenants will not be evicted.

- **SUPPOSE/SUPPOSING, WHAT IF**

Suppose/supposing and *what if* can replace *if*, mainly in everyday conversation, and are often used without a main clause:

Suppose/supposing you won the lottery, what would you do?
Suppose/supposing you can't find a job?
What if you are not accepted to university? What will you do then?

- **IF IT WEREN'T FOR / IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR, BUT FOR**

These expressions mean "without". They are used in second and third conditionals and are usually followed by a noun phrase:

If it weren't for Miguel, we wouldn't know what to do now. (Without Miguel...)
If it hadn't been for your foolishness, we wouldn't have got lost. (If you hadn't been such a fool...)
But for your help, I would have been in big trouble. (Without your help... / If you hadn't helped me...)

- **IF IN DOUBT, IF POSSIBLE, IF NECESSARY etc.**

We can make the *if*-clause shorter by omitting the subject and the verb *be*:

If (you are) in doubt, consult a dictionary.

In certain idiomatic expressions, the subject and *be* are normally omitted:

***If necessary**, you can call Jake at home.*
*I'd like a seat by the window **if possible**.*

- **IF SO, IF NOT**

If so and *if not* can stand for an *if*-clause which is understood from the context:

*"According to the weather forecast, it might rain tomorrow." "**If so**, we'll go hiking another day."*
*I hope Peter gets here soon. **If not**, we'll have to start without him.*

- **IN CASE and IF**

An *in case*-clause gives a reason while an *if*-clause describes a condition:

*I'll buy a sandwich **in case I get hungry**. (I'll buy a sandwich because I may get hungry later.)*
*I'll buy a sandwich **if I get hungry**. (I'll buy a sandwich when I get hungry.)*

We can use *should* after *in case*:

*Take an umbrella **in case it should rain**.*