

# Conditionals 1

## Conditions and results

- Sentences with *if* where one event depends on another event are called conditionals. The *if ...* clause is the condition and the other part of the sentence is the result. Here are four examples of conditionals used for talking about checking in at the airport for a flight:
  - 0 *If you arrive early, you get a better seat.*
  - 1 *If you arrive early, you'll get a better seat.*
  - 2 *If you arrived early, you'd get a better seat.*
  - 3 *If you had arrived early, you'd have got a better seat.*
- Sentence 0 is talking generally about something that is always true. It is called a zero conditional.
 

Sentence 1 describes what someone thinks will happen in a real situation. You believe that the things you are talking about will happen. It is called a real condition or the first conditional.

Sentence 2 describes what might happen in the future, or things you can imagine happening. It is called an imaginary condition or the second conditional.

Sentence 3 describes things you can imagine happening in the past. It is impossible to change the past, so this is called an impossible condition, or the third conditional.
- Zero, first and second conditionals are included in this unit. The third conditional is included in Grammar 13.

## Zero conditional: *if* + present simple, ... present simple

- Things that are always or generally true. We can use *when* or *if* to introduce the sentence.
 

*It's a tropical country, so if it rains hard, everyone stays indoors.*

*It's a tropical country, so when it rains hard, everyone stays indoors.*
- We can use an imperative structure in the result clause. An imperative is when we tell people what to do.
 

*If you feel dizzy, stop taking the tablets.*

*If you change your mind, give me a ring.*

## First conditional: *if* + present simple, ... *will/won't*

- Future events that will happen, or are likely to happen. The event is a real possibility in the speaker's mind, not imaginary (for imaginary situations see the second conditional).
 

*If we walk so slowly, we'll be late.*

*If we run, we won't be late.*

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

- Example: You are at the supermarket with a friend. Your friend has put some eggs in a bag, and is picking up lots of other bags at the same time. You say:

*If you carry too many bags, you'll drop the eggs.*

*If you drop the eggs, they'll break.*

*If the eggs break, there will be an awful mess on the floor!*

*If you are careful, you won't break them.*

- In the condition clause it is possible to use other present tenses, not just the present simple.

*If you're driving, I'll come with you.* (present continuous)

*If I've seen the film before, I'll let you know!* (present perfect)

### Second conditional: *if + past simple, ... would/wouldn't*

- Future events that are imaginary, unlikely or impossible.

*If I had a helicopter, I'd fly to school.*

*If I flew to school, I wouldn't be late.*

- Example: You start talking to a friend about aliens. You say:

*If some aliens landed on earth, I'd make friends with them.*

*If they didn't speak English, I'd use sign language.*

*If they took me back to their planet, I'd learn their language.*

*If anyone believed my story, I'd become famous!*

- In speech and informal writing the short form of *would* is 'd.

*I'd become famous.* (= *I would become famous.*)

- A past simple tense form is used in the condition clause, but the time reference is the future.

- We use the past forms of *be* in second conditionals (*I was, you were, he was* etc.), or we can use *I were* and *he/she were* in more formal sentences.

*If I was/were an astronaut, I'd enjoy being weightless!*

### Unless

*Unless* means 'if not' in sentences where we say that if something does not happen, something else will happen. These are sentences which have the same meaning.

*We'll go out for a walk if it doesn't rain.*

*We'll go out for a walk unless it rains.*

### Other uses of *would*

We use *would* in other situations which do not involve conditional sentences.

Reporting what someone said: *He said he would call back later.*

Polite offer: *Would you like some more tea?*

Polite request: *Would you open the window, please?*

Reporting a refusal: *The boys wouldn't keep quiet.*

## 1 Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.

- 1 If we'd be/we're late for class, our teacher will be/was angry.
- 2 If we would live/lived on another planet, we'll see/we'd see the Earth in the sky.
- 3 If we take/will take a taxi, we arrived/we'll arrive sooner.
- 4 If we won't hurry/don't hurry, we'll be/we'd be late.
- 5 If we were/are birds, we would be able to/are able to fly.
- 6 If you don't wear/wouldn't wear your pullover, you'll feel/you felt cold.
- 7 If I studied/will study harder, I get/would get better marks.
- 8 If I have/had a motorbike, I rode/I'd ride it to school.
- 9 If you will lend/lend me your bike, I'll let/I let you borrow my skateboard.
- 10 If I had/have lots of money, I gave/I'd give some to all my friends.

## 2 Complete the sentence for each situation using the verbs given.

- 1 You're standing very close to the edge of a swimming pool. You're wearing all your clothes, not a swimming costume. A friend says:

If you (fall in) ...fall in..., your clothes (get) ...will get... wet!

- 2 You're sitting in the classroom on a hot day. You're day dreaming about going to the beach. You think:

If today (be) ...were... a holiday, I (go) ...would go... to the beach.

- 3 You can't answer a question in your English book. You ask a friend to help, but she doesn't know the answer. She says:

If I (know) ...knew... the answer, I (tell) ...would tell... you.

- 4 You're walking towards the bus stop with a friend. Suddenly the bus arrives. The bus stop is far away, but you think there is a chance of catching the bus. You say:

If we (run) ...run..., we (catch) ...catch... it!

- 5 You're planning to go cycling tomorrow with some friends. You are not sure about the weather, because it sometimes rains at this time of the year. You arrange to meet tomorrow afternoon and say:

If it (rain) ...rained..., we (go) ...would go... to the cinema instead.

- 6 You're very busy, because you have lots of school work, and you also play in two teams. A friend asks you to join a computer club. You say:

If I (have) ...had... more free time, I (join) ...would join... the club.

But it's impossible at the moment because I'm too busy!

**3 Complete each sentence using *if*, *unless* or *would*.**

- 1 If he asked me to help him, I ..... *would* .....
- 2 We'll have lunch outside in the garden, ..... *unless* ..... it's too cold.
- 3 John ..... *would* ..... win more races if he trained harder.
- 4 Come on! ..... *unless* ..... we hurry, we'll miss the plane!
- 5 ..... *would* ..... you like to use my laptop?
- 6 The manager won't be long. .... *would* ..... you take a seat, please.
- 7 I'm sure that Connie ..... *would* ..... go to the cinema with you, if you asked her.
- 8 ..... *if* ..... you feel like a chat, phone me tonight.
- 9 What ..... *would* ..... you do if you saw a big spider?
- 10 I don't feel happy ..... *unless* ..... I swim every day.
- 11 ..... *would* ..... you lend me some money until Friday?
- 12 Could you phone me' ..... you'll be late?
- 13 ..... *unless* ..... you give me my pen back, I'll tell the teacher!
- 14 I'll come to your party ..... *if* ..... Sam is coming. I really like her!
- 15 ..... *if* ..... you feel cold, turn on the heating.

**4 Complete each sentence (1–14) with an ending (a – n).**

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1 If you play the music too loud, ..... <i>j</i> .....     | a the alarm would go off.            |
| 2 If aliens landed on Earth, ..... <i>g</i> .....          | b I'll buy a new bike.               |
| 3 If we don't have enough ice cream, ..... <i>e</i> .....  | c I'll be in Paris at 6.00.          |
| 4 If we leave now, ..... <i>n</i> .....                    | d you'll feel ill.                   |
| 5 If I found someone's wallet, ..... <i>m</i> .....        | e you wouldn't talk to me!           |
| 6 If a burglar broke into this house, ..... <i>a</i> ..... | f you would feel better.             |
| 7 If my train isn't late, ..... <i>e</i> .....             | g a lot of people would panic!       |
| 8 If you were famous, ..... <i>e</i> .....                 | h I'll get it for you.               |
| 9 If you eat any more cake, ..... <i>d</i> .....           | i you'll get wet.                    |
| 10 If my father lends me the money, ..... <i>b</i> .....   | j you'll wake up the neighbours.     |
| 11 If you fall in the water, ..... <i>i</i> .....          | k you'd understand more.             |
| 12 If you took more exercise, ..... <i>f</i> .....         | l we'll get some more.               |
| 13 If you tell me what you want, ..... <i>h</i> .....      | m I'd take it to the police station. |
| 14 If you used a dictionary, ..... <i>k</i> .....          | n we won't miss the bus.             |

**5 Complete each sentence as either a first conditional or a second conditional sentence using the verb in brackets.**

- 1 If I (have) ..... *had* ..... arms five metres long, I (be able) ..... *'d be able* ..... to reach the top of that shelf!
- 2 Don't worry, you've just got a cold. If you (take) ..... an aspirin, you (feel) ..... better.
- 3 Vegetarians believe that if nobody (eat) ..... meat, everyone (live) ..... longer.
- 4 If I (become) ..... a famous rock star, I (buy) ..... my parents an enormous house.
- 5 It says 'No Parking'. If you (leave) ..... the car here, the police (give) ..... you a parking fine.
- 6 It's not far. If you (follow) ..... this path, you (come) ..... to the station.
- 7 If people (use) ..... bikes instead of cars, there (not be) ..... so much pollution.
- 8 Actually, Brutus is a very friendly dog. If you (touch) ..... him, he (not bite) ..... you.
- 9 If you (leave) ..... your books on the desk, I (give) ..... them back to you at the end of the lesson.
- 10 If you (live) ..... on the 100th floor of a skyscraper, your friends (not want) ..... to visit you!

**6 Rewrite each sentence so it begins as shown.**

- 1 If you wear a pullover, you won't feel cold.  
If you don't ..... *wear a pullover you'll feel cold* .....
- 2 You'll get wet, unless you take your umbrella.  
If .....
- 3 You'll be late for school unless you get up now!  
If you .....
- 4 You won't get lost if you take a map.  
Unless .....
- 5 If we don't feed the cat now, it will get very hungry.  
The cat will .....
- 6 If it doesn't rain, we'll go for a walk.  
We won't .....

→ SEE ALSO

**Grammar 13: Conditionals 2**