

■ Conditionals

Zero conditional (if/when/whenever + present tense, present tense)

General or scientific facts and definitions

*If you **burn** fossil fuels, carbon dioxide **is produced**.*

First conditional (if + present tense, will + bare infinitive / imperative)

Real conditions in the present or future and their results in the present or future

*If we **continue** to pollute our planet, future generations **will suffer**.*

To give conditional instructions

*If the people from Greenpeace **call**, **tell** them I'll call them back later.*

Watch out!

Other modals and semi-modals can be used instead of *will* in the result clause in first conditionals. These include *be going to*, *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *have to* and *ought to*.

✓ *We **might** prevent disaster if we change the way we live now.*

Second conditional (if + past simple / past continuous, would + bare infinitive)

Hypothetical conditions in the present or future and their hypothetical results in the present or future

*What **would** the local government **do if** there **was** an earthquake in the area?*

Watch out!

Other modals can be used instead of *would* in the result clause in second conditionals. These include *might* and *could*.

✓ *If the weather was better, we **could** have a picnic.*

 vs  Grammar

- In British English, we can use both *was* and *were* after *if* with first and third person singular. *Were* is more common in a formal style. In American English, it is usual to use *were*.

UK: *If I **was/were** a gambler, I'd put money on Jim being late.*

US: *If I **were** a gambler, I'd put money on Jim being late.*

- In both British and American English, *were* is usually used in the phrase *If I were you, ...*

Third conditional (if + past perfect, would have + past participle)

Hypothetical conditions in the past and their results in the past

*A lot more people **would have been trapped** by the flood **if** there **hadn't been** a warning.*

Watch out!

Other modals can be used instead of *would* in the result clause in third conditionals. These include *might*, *could* and *should*.

✓ *If you **hadn't had** a lot of luck, you **could** have lost all your money.*

Mixed conditionals

Hypothetical conditions in the past and their results in the present

*You **might not be** in so much trouble **if** you **hadn't started** gambling.*

Hypothetical conditions in the present and their results in the past

***If I were** you, I **would have made** Paula buy her own lottery ticket.*

Inverted conditionals

| | |
|---|---|
| More formal form of the first conditional (with <i>should</i>) | Should the drought continue, many people will be forced to leave their villages. (= <i>If the drought should continue ... / If the drought continues ...</i>) |
| More formal form of the second conditional | Were we to stop using fossil fuels tomorrow, it would still take decades for the planet to recover. (= <i>If we were to stop ... / If we stopped ...</i>) |
| More formal form of the third conditional | Had Charles Darwin not visited the Galapagos Islands, he might never have developed his theory of evolution. (= <i>If Charles Darwin hadn't visited ...</i>) |

Watch out!

- When the verb to be inverted is negative, we put *not* after the subject.
✓ *Had we **not** attended the meeting, we would have had no idea of the council's plans.*
- When the *if* clause comes before the result clause, we usually separate the two clauses with a comma. When the result clause comes first, we do not use a comma.
✓ *If you share a car to work, you can save on energy.* ✓ *You can save on energy if you share a car to work.*

Other conditional structures

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|---------------------------------|--|
| As/so long as | We'll go up to the mountains this weekend as long as the weather's okay. |
| Provided/Providing (that) | You can have a pet provided that you promise to look after it properly. |
| On condition (that) | Applications for membership are accepted on condition that applicants are over 18. |
| Suppose/Supposing | Supposing the price of oil tripled tomorrow. What do you think would happen? |
| If it wasn't/weren't for + noun | I think I'd be quite lonely if it wasn't/weren't for my dog, Buster. |
| Were it not for + noun | Were it not for my dog, Buster, I think I'd be quite lonely. |
| But for + noun | But for your help, I wouldn't have been able to quit gambling. |
| If it hadn't been for + noun | If it hadn't been for your help, I wouldn't have been able to quit gambling. |
| Had it not been for + noun | Had it not been for your help, I wouldn't have been able to quit gambling. |
| If ... (should) happen to | If you (should) happen to see Davina, ask her whether she would look after the cats this weekend. |
| If ... should | If you should see Davina, ask her whether she would look after the cats this weekend. |
| If ... happened to | If you happened to see someone drop litter in the street, what would you do? |
| If ... were to | Do you think it would reduce pollution if the government were to introduce a new tax on petrol? |
| If so/not | Are you concerned about the environment? If so , you might be interested in joining Greenpeace. |
| Otherwise | You should have your air conditioner serviced, otherwise you'll waste a lot of energy. |
| Unless | Unless governments act now, the environment is really going to suffer. |
| In case of + noun | In case of fire, leave the building by the nearest emergency exit. |
| In case | Take a coat with you in case the weather gets worse. |

Other uses of if

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|-----------------------------------|---|
| To mean 'if it is true that' | If you were at the meeting, why didn't you raise the issue of recycling? |
| To mean 'if you are willing to' | If you'll follow me, I'll show you into the park manager's office. |
| To mean 'I'm saying this in case' | If you like zoos, the one in Singapore is fantastic. |