

If I do ... and If I did ...

A

Compare these examples:

- (1) LISA: Shall we go by bus or by train?
JESS: **If we go** by bus, it **will** be cheaper.

For Jess, it is possible that they will go by bus, so she says:

If we go by bus, it **will** be ...



- (2) Lisa and Jess decide to go by train.
Later, Jess talks to Joe.

- JOE: How are you going to travel?
JESS: We're going by train. **If we went** by bus, it **would** be cheaper, but the train is quicker.

Now Jess knows they are not going to travel by bus, so she says:

If we went by bus, it **would** be ... (not *If we go* ...)



When we imagine something that will not happen, or we don't expect that it will happen, we use **if + past** (**if we went / if there was / if you found** etc.).

But the meaning is *not* past:

- What would you do **if you won** a lot of money? (we don't really expect this to happen)
- If there was** (or **were**) an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?

For **if ... was/were**, see Unit 39C.

Compare **if I find** and **if I found**:

- I think I left my watch at your house. **If you find** it, can you call me?

but **If you found** a wallet in the street, what would you do with it?



B

We do not normally use **would** in the **if**-part of the sentence:

- I'd be very scared **if somebody pointed** a gun at me. (*not if somebody would point*)
- If we went** by bus, it would be cheaper. (*not If we would go*)

But you can use **if ... would** when you ask somebody to do something:

- (*from a formal letter*) I would be grateful **if you would let** me know your decision as soon as possible.

C

In the other part of the sentence (not the **if**-part) we use **would ('d) / wouldn't**:

- What **would** you **do** if you were bitten by a snake?
- I'm not going to bed yet. I'm not tired. If I went to bed now, I **wouldn't sleep**.
- Would** you **mind** if I used your phone?

Could and **might** are also possible:

- If I won a lot of money, I **might buy** a house. (= it is possible that I would buy a house)
- If it stopped raining, we **could go** out. (= we would be able to go out)