



CONDITIONALS

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Conditional sentences are usually divided into two parts (called clauses):

- the if clause
- the main clause

We usually separate the two clauses with a comma.

If can be replaced by WHETHER, UNLESS (if ... not) or IN CASE (because of the possibility).

TYPE 0

FORM: If + present simple / present simple

The sentences refer to “all time”, not just the present or future. They express a situation that is always true. If can be replaced by when or whenever.

- If I pour hot water onto ice, it melts.
- When it rains hard, everyone stays indoors.

TYPE I

FORM: If + present simple / will future

We use the first conditional to talk about a likely situation and to describe its result.

- If you give me your money, I'll let you go.
- If you don't give me my phone back, I'll call the police.

We often use first conditionals for promises, threats or warnings:

- If you aren't careful with the eggs, you'll break them.
- You won't pass your English exam if you don't study.

TYPE II

FORM: If + past simple / would + infinitive

We use the second conditional to talk about an imaginary or unlikely situation and to describe its result.

- If I had a lot of money, I would give some away to a charity.
- If I found some money in the street, I'd take it.

WOULD can be shortened into 'D.

With the verb BE, we usually use WERE for all persons:

- If I were you, I'd start studying that book as soon as possible.

FIRST OR SECOND CONDITIONAL?

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

- If I lose my job, I'll (my company is doing badly, there's a strong possibility) – ČE BOM
- If I lost my job, I'd (I'm just speculating) – ČE BI

TYPE III

FORM: If + past perfect / would have + past participle

We use the third conditional to talk about impossible events or the past.

- If I had taken my umbrella, I wouldn't have got wet.
- If I had studied phonetics as well, I'd have passed the exam.
- I wouldn't have wasted so much time if I had taken a map with me.

TIME CLAUSES

Conjunctions (vezniki) of time aren't usually followed by WILL. We use a present tense even though the time reference is future:

- I'll phone you when I get home.
- As soon as dinner is ready, I'll give you a call.
- Can I have a word with you before I go?
- Wait until I come back.
- When I've read the book, I'll lend it to you.
- I'll go home after I've done the shopping.

EXERCISES

- Make the first conditional
- Make the second conditional
- Make the third conditional
- Make the zero conditional
- Make the first, second and third conditionals
- Write your own endings to conditional sentences (PDF)