

## CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

There are four types of conditional sentences.

### I- Zero Conditional

*If I do not get enough sleep, I feel nervous.* (If + simple present → simple present)

- **We use this structure for facts that are generally true.**

*If you want to become a doctor, you have to study hard.*

- **We can say the same thing by reversing the two clauses. In that case, note that we do not use a comma in front of If.**

*I feel bad if I eat too much.*

### II- Type 1 conditional

1. **Basic uses: 'If the weather clears, we will go for a walk'**

**We can use all present tenses after if, not just the simple present, for example:**

*If she finishes work early, she will go home.* (if + simple present + will)

*If she has finished work by 4 o'clock, she will go home.* (if + present perfect + will)

**We can use all future tenses in the main clauses, not just the will-future:**

*If he doesn't hurry, the plane will have left by the time he gets to the airport.*

**We use this structure to talk about things that may happen in the future. Note that the verb in the if-clause is simple present, but we use it to mean a possible future action or situation.**

**We use the future tense for the result.**

*If we do not hurry,*

Future possibility

*we will not finish.*

Result

**We do not use the future after if.**

**Note that when we use type I conditional, the condition expressed in the sentence is quite likely to be fulfilled.**

**'If' + present + modal: 'If it's fine tomorrow, we may go for a swim'**

**-When we use will in the main clause, we are expressing certainty or near-certainty: *If the weather clears, we'll go for a walk.* (certain, or nearly certain)**

**-If we do not feel 'certain' enough to use will, we can use another modal to say what is possible, necessary or desirable, for example:**

*If it's fine tomorrow, we may go for a swim.* (it's possible)

*If it's fine tomorrow, we must go for a swim.* (it's necessary or desirable to do this)

### **'If + should' instead of 'if + present'**

*If + should*, instead of *if + present*, makes the condition more doubtful or very polite:  
**If I should** see him, **I'll ask** him to ring you. (= **If I see him**, **I'll ask** him to ring you.)

### **III. Type 2 conditional**

**Basic uses:** *'If you went by train, you would ...'*

We form **Type 2 conditionals** with *if + past (simple or progressive) --> would + stem*.

**1- We often use type 2 conditional to describe a present situation which is impossible (a hypothetical situation) or a future event that is unlikely to happen:**

*If he worked harder, he would do better.* (an impossible situation)

*If you had longer legs, you would be able to run faster.* (unlikely to happen)

*If she changed her job, she would be much happier.* (a situation unlikely to happen)

**NOTE:** *Whatever be the situation, the condition cannot be fulfilled.*

**2- We can use were in place of was after if in all persons. 'Were' is formal. We also prefer were when expressing doubt or imagining something:**

*If I was better qualified, I would apply for the job.* (If I was: less formal)

*If I were better qualified, I'd apply for the job.* (If I were: more formal)

*How would she be managing, if she were running a large company?* (progressive forms)

*If I were the Queen of Sheba, you would be King Solomon.* (were is preferable here)

**3- We use 'If I were you' and 'If I were in your position' to give advice. (Not if I was)**

**We can also refer to somebody else:** *If I were in Jane's position, I would look for a new job.*

### **IV. Type 3 conditional**

**Basic uses:** *'If you had gone by train, ...'*

**1- We form Type 3 conditionals with *if+ past perfect (simple or progressive) + would have*.**

**2- We often use Type 3 conditionals to express regret, etc. about things that can now never happen. This type of conditional expresses an unfulfilled condition in the past. We can use simple or progressive forms of the past perfect in the if-clause:**

- *If I had been taller, I would have joined the police force.*
- *If I had had any sense, I wouldn't have bought a second-hand car.*
- *If we had gone by car, we would have saved time.*
- *If I had been trying harder, I would have succeeded.*
- *If I could have stopped, there wouldn't have been an accident.*

*NOTE that the difference between conditional sentences type 2 and type 3 is that the former are used to refer to present or future imaginary situations whereas the latter are used to talk about how a past situation could have been different.*

**V. Conjunctions we can sometimes use in place of 'if'**

*1- We can introduce conditionals with conjunctions which do not always have exactly the same meaning as if, for example: assuming (that), as long as, even if, if only, on (the) condition (that), provided (or providing) that, so long as, suppose, supposing, unless:*

*Assuming (that) it is fine tomorrow, we will go for a swim.*

*2- In questions, we use: what if .....?, Supposing/ Suppose that ....., .....?, Imagine....., .....*

**'If not' and 'unless'**

*We can use if... not and unless in place of each other when we are saying 'except if'.*

**Unless is 'stronger' than if not and we sometimes use it in 'threats':**

*If you don't change your mind I will not be able to help you. (= Except if you change ...)*

*Unless you change your mind, I will not be able to help you. (= Except if you change ...)*

**We cannot use unless in place of if not when if not doesn't mean 'except if':**

*I'll be surprised **if he doesn't** win. (if not doesn't mean 'except if')*

*She would be better company **if she didn't complain** so much. (if not doesn't mean 'except if')*

**We often use unless (never if... not) to introduce an afterthought:**

*I couldn't have got to the meeting - **unless**, of course, I had caught an earlier train.*