

Conditional sentences

There are four types of conditional sentences:

0 – The zero conditional

1 – The first conditional

2 – The second conditional

3 – The third conditional

It is also possible to mix the second and third conditional. Let's look at each conditional to see how we use them.

The Zero Conditional

We use the zero conditional to talk about permanent truths, such as scientific facts, and general habits. The structure is simple:

If + present simple,	present simple.
50% possibility	100% certainty

Here are some examples:

If you **heat** water to 100°, it **boils**.

If you **eat** a lot, you **put on** weight.

The First Conditional

We use the first conditional to talk about a realistic situation in the present or future.

The structure of the first conditional is as follows:

If + present simple,	will + verb can + verb must + verb imperative form
50% possibility	100% certainty

Here are some examples:

If you're free later, we **can go** for a walk.
 If they're hungry, I'll **make** some sandwiches.
 If you're **not** back by 5pm, **give** me a ring.
 If he **studies** hard, he'll **do** well in the exam.
 If we **arrive** late, we **must get** a taxi.
 He'll **call** if he **needs** help.
 Take a break if you're tired.

The Second Conditional

We use the second conditional to talk about improbable or impossible situations in the present or future. Here is the structure:

If + past simple,	would + verb could + verb
0-5% possibility	100% certainty

For example:

*If I **had** more time, I'd **exercise** more.* (But I don't have more time so I don't.)
*If I **were** rich, I'd **spend** all my time travelling.* (But I'm not rich so I can't.)
*If she **saw** a snake, she'd **be** terrified.*
*If he **didn't have to** work late, he **could go** out with his girlfriend.*
*What **would** you **do** if you **were** offered a job in Canada?*
*You **wouldn't have to** walk everywhere if you **bought** a bike.*

A common expression used to give advice has the second conditional structure. The expression is '**If I were you**, I'd..', meaning 'in your situation, this is what I would do'. For example:

A: I've got a headache.
 B: **If I were you, I'd** take an aspirin.
 A: I don't understand this.
 B: **If I were you, I'd** ask your teacher for help.

The Third Conditional

We use the third conditional to talk about impossible situations, as in the second conditional, in the past. We often use the third conditional to describe regrets. The structure is:

If + past perfect,	would have + past participle could have + past participle
0% possibility	100% certainty

Here are some examples:

If we **had left** earlier, we **would have arrived** on time.
If you **hadn't forgotten** her birthday, she **wouldn't have been** upset.
If they **had booked** earlier, they **could have found** better seats.

Mixed Conditionals

It's possible to combine the second and third conditional in one sentence when we want to make a hypothesis about the past that has a consequence in the present. In this case, the structure is:

If + past perfect,	would+ verb could + verb
0% possibility	100% certainty

Here are some examples:

If you'd **studied** harder, you'd **be** at a higher level now.
We'd **be** lying on a beach now if we **hadn't missed** the plane.
They'd **have** much more confidence if they **hadn't lost** so many matches.
What **would** you **be** doing now if you **hadn't decided** to study?

Wish

We use the **past tense** after wish: i wish I knew, I wish you were here...We use wish to say that something is not as we would like it to be:

I wish I didn't have to work tomorrow.
I wish there weren't so many people.

We use wish the **past perfect tense** after wish to say we are sorry something did not happen.

The weather was very cold, I wish it had been warmer.
I feel sick, I wish I hadn't eaten so much.