Conditionals: other expressions (*unless, should, as long as*)

Unless

Conditional clauses can begin with *unless*. *Unless* means something similar to 'if … not' or 'except if'.

The verb forms in the examples are similar to sentences with *if*: we use the present simple in the *unless*-clause and *shall, should, will, would, can, could, may* or *might* in the main clause:

***Unless** I **phone** you, you **can** assume the train's on time.* (If I do not phone you /except if I phone you, you can assume the train is on time.)

Warning:

We don't use *unless* for impossible conditions:

*If the government had **not** raised food prices, there would not have been so many protests.*

Not: ~~Unless the government had raised food prices~~ …

Warning:

We don't use *unless* and *if* together:

*We'll go to the coast tomorrow **unless** it rains.*

Not: ~~We'll go to the coast tomorrow unless if it rains~~.

Should you (*Should* with inversion)

In formal situations, we can use *should* + subject (s) + verb (v) instead of *if*:

***Should you** wish to cancel your order, please contact our customer service department on 02317 6658932.* (or *If you should wish to cancel your order …*)

Had you (*Had* with inversion)

In formal situations, we can use *had* + subject + verb instead of *if* in third conditional sentences:

***Had I** known you were waiting outside, I would have invited you to come in.* (If I had known you were waiting outside …)

As long as, so long as, providing, etc.

Sometimes we need to impose specific conditions or set limits on a situation. In these cases, conditional clauses can begin with phrases such as **as long as, so long as, only if, on condition that, providing (that), provided (that).**

As long as is more common in speaking; *so long as* and *on condition that* are more formal and more common in writing:

[to a group of children]

*You can play in the living room **as long as** you don't make a mess.*

***So long as** a tiger stands still, it is invisible in the jungle.*

*The bank lent the company 100,000 pounds **on condition that** they repaid the money within six months.*

Providing (that) is more common in speaking; ***provided (that)*** is more formal and more common in written language:

[talking about rail travel in the UK]

*You can get a senior citizen's reduction **providing** you've got a railcard.*

*They may do whatever they like **provided that** it is within the law.*

Or and otherwise

We often use **or** and **otherwise** with conditional meanings:

*You've got to start studying, **or** you'll fail all those exams.* (If you don't start studying, you will fail the exams.)

[talking about sending a package by mail]

*We'd better send it express, **otherwise** it'll take days.* (If we do not send it express, it will take days.)

Supposing

Supposing may be used with a conditional meaning. It can be used in first, second or third conditional sentences. The speaker invites the listener to imagine a situation:

Supposing I don't arrive till after midnight, will the guest-house still be open?(Imagine if I don't arrive till after midnight …)

Supposing you lost your passport, you'd have to go to the embassy, wouldn't you?

Supposing he hadn't recognised us – he might never have spoken to us.

In case (of)

They will cancel the concert in case it rains /in case of rain.