

# Conditionals 1

## A Conditions and results

- Compare these sentences. The 'if ...' clause is the condition, and the other part of the sentence is the result.
  - If sales **increase** (generally), we **make** more profit.
  - If sales **increase** (next quarter), we'll **make** more profit.
  - If sales **increased** (next quarter), we'd **make** more profit.
  - If sales **increased** (last quarter), the Director **should** be happier.
  - If sales **had increased** (last quarter), the Director **would have been** happier.
- Sentence 1 is about something that is always true. See section B below.  
Sentence 2 is about something that is reasonably likely to happen in the future. See section C.  
Sentence 3 is about something that is imaginary or unlikely in the future. See section D.
- Sentences 4 and 5 are about the past. See unit 18.
- With all types of conditionals the *if* clause can come second.  
We'll **make** more profit **if** sales **increase**.  
We'd **make** more profit **if** sales **increased**.

## B If we sell ... (always true)

When we want to talk about things that are always or generally true, we use:  
*If/When* + present, present simple or imperative  
 (condition) (result)

In this type of conditional we are not referring to one specific event.

*If people **understand** that change is necessary, they **have** an appetite for it. ... If you **don't get** the best people into the company, your product **suffers**.* (Business Week website)

In the condition clause there can be a variety of present forms.

- When you **fly** business class, you **get** much more legroom.* (present simple)
- If interest rates **are rising**, bank loans **become** more expensive.* (present continuous)
- When you've **finished** the course, you **get** a certificate.* (present perfect)

In the result clause there can be a present simple (last examples) or an imperative.  
*When you fly business class, **don't drink** too much of the free alcohol.*

- Notice that we can use either *if* or *when* where the meaning is 'every time'.

## C If we sell ... (likely future)

- When we want to talk about future events that will happen, or are likely to happen, we use:  
*If* + present, future or imperative  
 (condition) (result)

*If the compromise deal **fails**, who knows what **will happen** at Equitable Life?* (Telegraph website)

- In the condition clause there can be a variety of present forms.

- If you **increase** your order, we'll give you a bigger discount.* (present simple)
- If you're **meeting** her at three, I'll join you later at about four.* (present continuous)
- If I've **made** any mistakes, I'll correct them later.* (present perfect)

In the result clause 'll is common (last examples). We can also use other future forms or an imperative.

- If you increase your order, you're **going to get** a bigger discount.* (going to future)
- If he doesn't get the job, he'll **have done** a lot of work for nothing.* (future perfect)
- If anyone from Head Office calls, **say** I'm in a meeting.* (imperative)

The examples above are about two actions in the future. If the result clause refers to the present we use a present tense.

- If anyone calls, I'm in a meeting all morning.*
- If you need me, I'm **working** in the room at the end of the corridor.*

## D If we sold ... (imaginary future)

When we want to talk about future events that are imaginary, unlikely or impossible, we use:

*If* + past simple or continuous, *would/could/might* + infinitive  
 (condition) (result)

*'Outsourcing is the only solution. If we **did** all of this stuff ourselves, we **would have to have** at least 1,000 people working here,' estimates Ardai.* (Business Week website)

In the condition clause we can use a past simple or past continuous.

- If you **wanted** a quantity discount, you'd have to order at least 1,000 units.*
- If you **were still speaking** after an hour, the audience **would probably be** bored.*

Note the past form in the condition clause, but the future time reference.

## E Unless

*Unless* means the same as *if ... not*.

*Polish attitudes are dominated by the belief that **unless** Poland joins the European Union, things **can** only get worse.* (Le Monde Diplomatique website)

Compare these sentences which have the same meaning:

- If he **doesn't** arrive soon, he'll miss the start of the presentation.*
- Unless** he arrives soon, he'll miss the start of the presentation.*

## F Other modals

The modals used in this unit are mainly *will* and *would*. We can use all other modals like *can*, *could*, *must*, etc, with their normal meanings.

## 17 Practice

### Exercise 1 B C D E

Underline the correct words.

- 1 If we're/we would be late, they'll start/they'd start without us.
- 2 If we will take/take a taxi, we'll arrive/we arrive sooner.
- 3 If we worked/would work for ADC, we'll get/we'd get a better salary.
- 4 When inflation will go/goes up, there would be/is usually pressure on salaries.
- 5 If we don't hurry/won't hurry, we would be/we'll be late.
- 6 If you change/are changing your mind, give me/you will give me a ring.
- 7 Unless you click/would click on that icon, it didn't/it won't print out.
- 8 If you ordered/order on the Net, we always will send/send an email confirmation.
- 9 If I lend/will lend you this book, when do you return/will you return it?
- 10 If you heard/hear anything in the next few days, let me/letting me know.

### Exercise 2 C D

Read these sentences and decide if the events are likely or imaginary. Complete the sentences by putting the verbs in brackets into the present simple + *will* or the past simple + *would*. Use contracted forms where possible.

- 1 It's not far. If you follow (follow) this road, you will come (come) to the station.
- 2 If I was (be) on the Board of this company, I would argue (argue) against the merger.
- 3 If you ..... (have) any questions, I ..... (deal) with them at the end of my presentation.
- 4 If the council ..... (ban) all cars from the city centre, there ..... (not be) so much pollution.
- 5 A: I have no idea what the other side are going to propose in the negotiation tomorrow.  
B: Neither do I. If I ..... (know), I ..... (tell) you.
- 6 A: My train leaves in forty minutes.  
B: It only takes ten minutes to the station by taxi. If you ..... (leave) now, you ..... (catch) it.
- 7 A: Is that the time? I really should be going.  
B: If you ..... (wait) a moment, I ..... (give) you a lift.
- 8 A: Would you like to go to English evening classes with me?  
B: I'm sorry, but I can't. I'm really busy. If I ..... (have) more time, I ..... (love) to.

### Exercise 3 B C D

Complete the sentences with the correct pair of possible forms, a) or b).

- 1 If the bank lends us the money, we'll invest it in new machinery.  
a) we'll invest/we're going to invest b) we'd invest/we were investing
- 2 When ..... a lot of orders, we always employ extra staff in the factory.  
a) we'll get/we got b) we get/we've got
- 3 If ..... this project again, I think I'd do it differently.  
a) I was starting/I started b) I'll start/I've started
- 4 If the computer crashes, ..... someone from the IT department.  
a) you'd call/you are calling b) call/you'll have to call

### Exercise 4 B C D E

Paula, a marketing manager of a car manufacturing company, is talking to her colleague Luis, a production manager. Complete their conversation with the words from the list below.

will (x2) won't (x2) would (x2) wouldn't unless (x2) be is is going to be don't didn't

- PAULA: Luis. Aren't you worried about the proposed strike?
- LUIS: Well, sure ...
- PAULA: You see, if the factory workers go on strike, we (1) ..... lose a lot of production. If we lose production, we (2) ..... be able to supply all our customers.
- LUIS: Yes, I know, but ...
- PAULA: And if we (3) ..... supply our customers, they'll probably buy other makes of car. If that happens, our market share (4) ..... go down. It's not looking good.
- LUIS: Well, that's right, but ...
- PAULA: And what's more, in my experience, when workers go on strike there (5) ..... a bad atmosphere for months afterwards.
- LUIS: Yes.
- PAULA: So, (6) ..... you can come to an agreement with the workers soon, there (7) ..... a lot of trouble ahead. If you want my advice, (8) ..... very careful.
- LUIS: Look, don't worry.
- PAULA: Don't worry?
- LUIS: Yes. Look, the workers know that the success of the company depends on this new model. (9) ..... they're stupid, they (10) ..... go on strike.
- PAULA: Oh?
- LUIS: Now, just imagine – if it sold really well, we (11) ..... increase our market share and our profits. If that happened, we (12) ..... need to make so many job cuts. And if we (13) ..... have to cut jobs, the trade unions (14) ..... be much happier.
- PAULA: Well, I suppose you've got a point.

### Exercise 5 B C D

You are talking to a friend about your new job. Use your thoughts to complete the sentences you say. Put the verb in brackets into either the present simple, past simple, imperative, *will* + infinitive or *would* + infinitive.

**You think:** *People say that hard work usually results in promotion in this company.*

**You say:** (1) They say that if you work (work) hard, you get (get) promoted.

**You think:** *I want to show them that I'm good at my job so that I can have more job security.*

**You say:** (2) I hope that if I ..... (do) my best, they ..... (give) me a permanent contract after a few months.

**You think:** *I've been late in the morning a few times. I wish I could work at the Leiria site which is nearer my home.*

**You say:** (3) I'm sometimes late for work. If I ..... (work) at the Leiria site, it ..... (not be) such a problem.

**You think:** *One thing worries me. I had a health problem a few years ago, but it's very unlikely that it will reoccur.*

**You say:** (4) I wonder what ..... (happen) if my health problem ..... (reoccur)?

**You think:** *Maybe it's not a problem. In general they seem to be very reasonable about illness.*

**You say:** (5) Actually, if you ..... (miss) one or two days because of illness, they ..... (not seem) to mind.

**You think:** *Goodbye. I hope I'll see you soon.*

**You say:** (6) If you ..... (fancy) a drink one evening, just ..... (give) me a ring.

## Conditionals 2

### A If we sold ... (possible past)

When we want to talk about past events which possibly happened, we use *if* + past simple in the condition clause, and any tense or modal in the result clause.

*If you went to the meeting yesterday, you probably heard the news.*

*If you missed the TV programme last night, you can borrow the recording I made.*

### B If we had sold ... (imaginary past)

When we want to talk about past events that are different to what really happened, we use:

*if* + past perfect, *would* + *have* + past participle  
(condition) (result)

*If Clinton and Gore had won the election, they would have promoted free trade agreements with other nations in the same way as Bush.* (Yahoo Business News website)

There is often a suggestion of criticism or regret:

*If the economic situation had been better, we wouldn't have lost so many customers.*

- 1. A contracted 'd in speech can be *had* in the condition or *would* in the result.  
*If I'd done an MBA, I'd have had more opportunities.*
- 2. The examples above are about two actions in the past. If the result clause refers to the present we use *would* + infinitive.  
*If I had done an MBA, I would be on a higher salary now.*

### C Conditionals without *if*

- 1. We use *if* for something that might happen in the future, or something imaginary. We use *when* for something that we know will happen.  
*I'll call you if I get a chance.* (I'm not sure if I will phone you)  
*I'll call you when I arrive.* (I will definitely phone you)

We can use either *if* or *when* where the meaning is 'every time'.

*If/When anyone rings my mobile, I get a photograph of the person on the screen.*

In informal speech we sometimes use *imagine* or *supposing* in place of *if*.  
*Imagine/Supposing you had a million dollars, how would you invest it?*

We can use *provided that*, *providing*, *on condition that*, *as long as* and *so long as* for emphasis. The meaning is 'if and only if'.

*As long as there is new technology, consultants will continue to be in demand.* (Sunday Times website)

We can use *in case* to talk about doing something to avoid a possible problem later. The result clause usually comes first and often uses *going to*.

*I'm going to give you my mobile number in case you need to contact me.*

We use *unless* to mean *if not*.

## D Wish

- 1. We use *I wish* to express regret or dissatisfaction.  
*I wish we didn't have so many meetings.*  
*I wish I wasn't working next weekend.*
- 2. For the present and future, use *I wish* followed by the past simple or continuous.  
*I wish we had advertised on television.*  
*I wish I hadn't eaten the oysters.*
- 3. For the past, use *I wish* followed by the past perfect.  
*I wish we had advertised on television.*  
*I wish I hadn't eaten the oysters.*
- 4. If the wish is a good one, use *I hope* followed by the present simple or *will*.  
*I hope your presentation goes well.*  
*I hope the merger will be a success.*
- 5. If the wish is about doing something that is difficult or impossible, use *I wish I could*.  
*I wish I could contact him, but he hasn't got a mobile phone.*
- 6. We can replace *I wish* with *if only* for emphasis. We stress *only* in speech.  
*If only I hadn't eaten the oysters.*  
*If only I could contact him.*

## E Modal verbs in conditionals

The examples in unit 17 were with *will*. But other modal verbs like *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must* and *should* are common in conditional sentences and have their normal meanings.

*If you deal with the Middle East you must be available to your customers on Saturdays and Sundays.* (Overseas Trade magazine)

*If the euro were weak in the long term, companies might slow down their drive to increase productivity and governments might put the brake on their structural reforms.* (Le Monde diplomatique website)

*Compaq CEO Michael Capellas commented on the recent decline of dot.com firms, which were so popular on the U.S. stock market a few months ago. 'If you don't have a sound business plan, you cannot succeed.'* (International Herald Tribune website)

- 1. We often use present forms like *will* and *can* with likely futures, and past forms like *would* ('d) and *could* with imaginary futures.  
*If you sign now, we'll/can deliver by Friday.* (likely future)  
*If you signed now, we'd/could deliver by Friday.* (imaginary future)
- 2. But it is also common to find mixed tense sequences because modals keep their normal meanings.  
*If Hungarian farmers respond to competition by improving productivity and becoming more efficient at marketing, they could have a bigger share of the market.* (Business Central Europe website)  
With a present form (*respond*) we might expect *can*. However *could* is used here with its normal meaning of uncertainty (*can* does not express uncertainty).

## F If I were you, ...

- 1. We can use *if I were* in place of *if I was* in imaginary futures, particularly when we give advice with the phrase *if I were you*.  
*If I were you, I'd wait until tomorrow.*  
*I'd be more careful, if I were you.*

## 18 Practice

### Exercise 1 B F unit 17

Underline the correct words. This exercise includes revision of imaginary futures.

- If you *phoned/had phoned* me yesterday, I *had told/would have told* you.
- If you *took/would have taken* more exercise, you *might feel/had felt* better.
- If Tim *would have listened/had listened* more carefully, he *wouldn't have made/didn't make* that mistake.
- If *we'd found/we found* suitable premises, *we'd have moved/we had moved* earlier.
- If people *kept/had kept* their offices more tidy, it *might present/presented* a better image to our visitors.
- If *I'd known/I would know* about their financial problems, I *wouldn't do/wouldn't have done* business with them.
- If our side *had been/was* better prepared, we *succeeded/could have succeeded* in the negotiations.
- I *wouldn't/won't* worry if I *am/were* you.

### Exercise 2 C

Complete the sentences with the words from the list below. Each word is used twice.

when as long as in case unless

- I'll speak to you again ..... when ..... I've looked at the contract in detail.
- Leave your return flight open ..... the negotiations take an extra day.
- We can start the project next week ..... everyone agrees.
- We can start the project next week ..... anyone disagrees.
- The Board will be happy ..... our share price remains high.
- Keep your receipt ..... you need to return the goods.
- The new stock will arrive ..... the Christmas sales are finished.
- We'll probably make a loss this year ..... sales improve in the last quarter.

### Exercise 3 D

Underline the correct words.

- I wish I hadn't drunk/didn't drink so many whiskies last night.
- There's so little space in here. I wish I have/had a bigger office.
- I don't feel well. I wish I could stay/will stay in bed this morning.
- I hope you enjoyed/enjoy yourselves at the theatre tonight.
- I've been waiting thirty minutes for the bus. I wish I took/had taken a taxi.
- I must get in touch with Sue. If only I know/knew her number!
- I'm not a good typist. I wish I could type/would type better.
- I wish Jim didn't interrupt/doesn't interrupt so often in meetings.
- I have to finish this report by tomorrow. If only I would have/had more time.
- Enjoy your holiday. I hope you have/could have a good time.
- That presentation was a disaster! I wish I could do/would do it all again!
- I'm disappointed with this camera. I wish I didn't buy/hadn't bought it.

### Exercise 4 B C E

Patrick and Jurgen are discussing a negotiation that went wrong. Complete the dialogue with words from the list below.

if as long as in case unless (x2) 'll 'd (x2) can would have 'd have wouldn't have

- PATRICK: Jurgen, (1) ..... if ..... you've got a moment, (2) ..... I have a word with you?
- JURGEN: Sure. (3) ..... it doesn't take too long, I've got a meeting in five minutes. Is it about that contract that we lost?
- PATRICK: Yes. What went wrong? Do you think we (4) ..... got the deal if we (5) ..... offered a better price? Maybe we (6) ..... lost the business.
- JURGEN: No, I don't think the problem was the price.
- PATRICK: No? Well, was it a problem with the delivery time? If we (7) ..... given a shorter delivery time, (8) ..... we ..... been more successful?
- JURGEN: No, the delivery time was OK.
- PATRICK: Hmm, this is strange. We really should find out what went wrong (9) ..... a situation like this happens in the future. You know, (10) ..... we learn from our mistakes, we (11) ..... lose more orders. Now, Jurgen, tell me what do you think could really have happened?
- JURGEN: Well, nothing, (12) ..... they didn't like our sales rep.
- PATRICK: Oh?
- JURGEN: Do you know who it was?
- PATRICK: Er, it was me.

### Exercise 5 B E unit 17

A supplier is thinking about a negotiation in the future. Match his thoughts 1–4 with his words a)–d).

- |   |                                     |   |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1 We're likely to offer a lower price. If we do, success is possible. | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | b | a) If we offer a lower price, we'll get the contract.      |
| 2 We're likely to offer a lower price. If we do, success is certain.  | <input type="checkbox"/>            |   | b) If we offer a lower price, we might get the contract.   |
| 3 Perhaps we'll offer a lower price. If we do, success is possible.   | <input type="checkbox"/>            |   | c) If we offered a lower price, we'd get the contract.     |
| 4 Perhaps we'll offer a lower price. If we do, success is certain.    | <input type="checkbox"/>            |   | d) If we offered a lower price, we might get the contract. |

The same supplier is thinking about a negotiation in the past. Match his thoughts 5–8 with his words e)–h).

- |   |                          |  |   |
|---|--------------------------|--|---|
| 5 We offered a lower price. That's why we succeeded.            | <input type="checkbox"/> |  | e) If we'd offered a lower price, we'd have got the contract.           |
| 6 We offered a lower price. That's probably why we succeeded.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |  | f) If we'd offered a lower price, we might have got the contract.       |
| 7 We didn't offer a lower price. That's why we failed.          | <input type="checkbox"/> |  | g) If we hadn't offered a lower price, we'd have lost the contract.     |
| 8 We didn't offer a lower price. That's probably why we failed. | <input type="checkbox"/> |  | h) If we hadn't offered a lower price, we might have lost the contract. |