

CONDITIONALS

Compare these sentences. The IF ... clause is **the condition**, and the other part of the sentence is **the result**.

1. If sales **increase** (generally), we **make** more profit.
2. If sales **increase** (next quarter), we'll **make** more profit.
3. If sales **increased** (next quarter), we'd **make** more profit.
4. If sales **had increased** (last quarter), the Director **would have been** happier.

Task for you: Which sentence is about something

- a) that is reasonably likely to happen in the future
- b) hypothetical situation in the past
- c) that is always true
- d) that is imaginary or unlikely in the future

[1c, 2a, 3c, 4b]

I. ZERO CONDITIONALS

FORM:

IF/WHEN + PRESENT(condition), *PRESENT SIMPLE* or *IMPERATIVE* (result)

- used to talk about things that are always or generally true
- isn't used to refer to one specific event

If you don't get the best people into the company, your product suffers.

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

*If interest rates **are rising**, bank loans **become** more expensive.*

- in the result **clause** there can be a present simple or an imperative
- notice that we can use either *if* or *when* where the meaning is "every time"

When you fly business class, **don't drink** too much of the free alcohol.

II. FIRST CONDITIONALS

FORM:

IF + PRESENT (condition),, FUTURE or IMPERATIVE (result)

- used to talk about future events that will happen, or are likely to happen
- in the condition clause there can be variety of present forms

*If you **increase** your order, we'll give you a bigger discount.*

*If you're **meeting** her at three, I'll join you later at about four.*

*If I've **made** any mistakes, I'll correct them later.*

- in the result clause we can use **other future forms** or **an imperative**

*If you increase your order, you're **going** to get a bigger discount.*

*If he doesn't get the job, he'll **have done** a lot of work for nothing.*

*If anyone from Head Office calls, **say** I'm in a meeting.*

III. SECOND CONDITIONALS

FORM:

IF + PAST SIMPLE or CONTINUOUS (condition),

WOULD/COULD/MIGHT + INFINITIVE (result)

- used to talk about future events that are imaginary, unlikely or impossible
- 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 100 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

IV. THIRD CONDITIONALS

FORM:

IF + PAST PERFECT (condition),

WOULD + HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE (result)

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

- used to talk about past events that are **different** to what **really happened**
- there is often a suggestion of criticism or regret

V. MIXED CONDITIONALS

*If sales **had increased** (last quarter), the Director **would have been** happier (last quarter).*

*If sales **had increased** (last quarter), the Director **would be** happier (even today).*

*If I **had done** an MBA (in the past), I **would be** on a higher salary (now).*