Mixed conditionals

Mixed real conditionals

In factual conditionals, we usually use the same tense in both clauses (1), but we sometimes use a mixture of past and present tenses in the clauses (2).

1 *If it **snowed** heavily, we **didn't go** to school.* • *If she **works** late, I **wait** for her.*
2 *If you **saw** the film, you **know** how it ends.* • *If they **don't understand** what to do, they probably **weren't listening** earlier.*

Some factual conditionals are used to describe habits in the past with *would* (*'d*). It has the same meaning as *used to*. It makes the sentence look like a hypothetical conditional, but it isn't.

3 *When we were kids, if it **rained** a lot, **we'd stay** indoors. But if it **was** sunny, **we'd** often **go** down to the lake.*

In predictive conditionals, we usually use the present simple in the *if*-clause (4), but we can also use the past simple (5) or present perfect (6).

4 *If we **don't eat** now, **we'll get** hungry later during the concert.*
5 *If you **studied** for the test, you **won't have** any problems.*
6 *If they**'ve finished** already, **we'll give** them something else to do.*

When we use predictive conditionals to express a preference, we can include *would* with verbs of 'liking' or 'not liking' in the main clause (7). We can also use *would rather* plus the base form of a verb when we express a preference between alternatives which have been suggested (8).

7 *If it **isn't** too late, **we'd like** to watch the news on TV.*
8 *If it**'s** OK with you, **I'd rather stay** here.* (You suggested going somewhere else.)

Mixed unreal conditionals

In hypothetical conditionals, instead of connecting an imaginary event to a possible present or future event using *would* (9), we can connect it to a possible past event with *would have* (10).
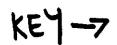
9 *If we **were** rich, we **would offer** to help those poor people who are suffering.*
10 *If we **were** rich, we **would have offered** to help those poor people who were suffering.*

In counterfactual conditionals, instead of connecting an imaginary past event to another past event using *would have* (11), we can connect it to a present event or situation using *would* (12).

11 *If your parents **hadn't met**, you **wouldn't have been born**.*
12 *If your parents **hadn't met**, you **wouldn't be sitting** here now.*

9 Add *he* or *he'd* and the following words to this extract from the poem *The Rum Tum Tugger* by T. S. Eliot.

chase   have   prefer   rather   wants

The Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat.
If you offer him pheasant, (1) .... would .... have grouse.
If you put him in a house, (2) .... would much .... a flat,
If you put him in a flat, then (3) .... rather .... a house.
If you set him on a mouse, then (4) .... only .... a rat,
If you set him on a rat, then (5) .... rather .... a mouse.
Yes, the Rum Tum Tugger is a Curious Cat.