

CONDITIONALS

There are four basic types of **conditional sentences**:

Zero conditional: *I take my umbrella if it rains.*

First conditional: *I'll call you if I work late.*

Second conditional: *If the bus didn't arrive on time, I would drive you to the airport.*

Third conditional: *She wouldn't have come if I hadn't invited her.*

Zero conditional

USE:

The zero conditional describes situations that are always true; we use it to **state general truths**.
If has the same meaning as *when* (or *whenever*).

If I go to school, I get up at seven. (Whenever I go to school I get up at the same time.)

If you park your car on double yellow lines, you pay a fine. (Whenever you park illegally, you pay a fine.)

If we heat ice, it melts. = *Ice melts if we heat it.*

FORM:

We use the **present simple tense** in both the main clause and the if clause.

If + present tense, present tense.

First conditional

USE:

The first conditional refers to the present or future. The first conditional sentences are used to **speculate about possible situations that can really happen**.

We **do not use "will" in an if clause** to describe future activities (compare it to time clauses).

If he studies hard, he'll pass the exams.

If we catch the 10.15 train, we will arrive on time.

If you don't get the ticket, what will you do?

FORM:

If + present tense, will + infinitive of verb

Second conditional

USE:

The second conditional also refers to the present or future. In second conditional sentences we **speculate about situations that will probably never happen**.

If I had more time, I would help you. (But I am not free at the moment. I can't help you.)

If I won a million dollars, I would start a business of my own. (But I know that it is not realistic.)

Form

If + past tense, would + infinitive of verb

Note: the verb *to be* can have a specific form in the if clause.

If I were rich, I wouldn't work. If he were younger, he would marry her.

(But *was* is also possible: *If I was rich, I wouldn't work. If he was younger, he would marry her.*)

But: If I were you, I wouldn't do it. (In this expression, *were* is much more usual than *was*.)

EXERCISES:

First conditional

1. If you _____ (send) this letter now, she _____ (receive) it tomorrow.
2. If I _____ (do) this test, I _____ (improve) my English.
3. If I _____ (find) your ring, I _____ (give) it back to you.
4. Peggy _____ (go) shopping if she _____ (have) time in the afternoon.
5. Simon _____ (go) to London next week if he _____ (get) a cheap flight.
6. If her boyfriend _____ (phone / not) today, she _____ (leave) him.
7. If they _____ (study / not) harder, they _____ (pass / not) the exam.

Second conditional

1. If we _____ (have) a yacht, we _____ (sail) the seven seas.
2. If he _____ (have) more time, he _____ (learn) karate.
3. If they _____ (tell) their father, he _____ (be) very angry.
4. She _____ (spend) a year in the USA if it _____ (be) easier to get a green card.
5. My brother _____ (buy) a sports car if he _____ (have) the money.
6. If I _____ (feel) better, I _____ (go) to the cinema with you.
7. If you _____ (go) by bike more often, you _____ (be / not) so flabby.

(adapted from <http://www.ego4u.com>)