

Conditionals

There are three types of conditionals.

| | If-clause | Main clause | Use |
|--------|--|--|---|
| Type 1 | If + Present tense (or should + bare infinitive: more doubtful or polite) | Future Present Imperative ought to (advice) had better (advice) should, must may can | Use Real situation (likely to happen in the present or future or a general truth) |
| | e.g. <i>If it rains, we'll stay at home.</i> <i>If you heat water, it boils. (will boil is also possible)</i> <i>If you should see him, give him my message.</i> | | |
| Type 2 | If + Past tense | would could + infinitive should might | Advice or imaginary situation in the present or future (unreal or unlikely to happen) |
| | e.g. <i>If I were you, I would tell her the truth. (advice)</i> <i>If he were here, he could help me. (imaginary situation)</i> | | |
| Type 3 | If + Past Perfect | would could (ability/permission) + have + p.p. should (advice) might (possibility) | Imaginary situation in the past (unfulfilled plans, regrets, wishes impossible to fulfil) |
| | e.g. <i>If he had worked harder, he would have been promoted. (unfulfilled plan)</i> | | |

Notes

- Future tense (will/would) with a future meaning is never used in if-clauses. However, **will/would** can be used to show willingness or insistence.
e.g. *If you will wait for a moment, I'll wrap it for you. (willingness)*
If you will go on chatting, I'll send you out of the classroom. (insistence)
- The if-clause can either precede or follow the main clause. When the if-clause precedes the main clause, we put a comma after it. When the main clause comes first, no comma is used to separate the two clauses.
e.g. *If he is still in Paris, he may visit us.*
He may visit us if he is still in Paris.
- Other expressions used in place of "if" are the following:
otherwise, even if, even though, when, provided (that), providing, as long as, suppose, supposing, since, as, unless (if not), but for + gerund/noun, in case + Present (for the present) or Past (for the past).
- unless** (= if not) is used in Type 1 conditional sentences.
e.g. *Unless he gets a promotion, he'll resign.*

5. When referring to imaginary or unreal situations **suppose** can be followed either by Simple Past or Past Perfect for present or past situations respectively.

e.g. **Suppose** you **missed** the bus, what would you do?

Suppose, however, can be followed by Present Simple to express a situation which may happen in the future or to introduce suggestions.

e.g. **Suppose** she **is** on holiday, how shall we contact her?

6. In Reported speech, the verb tenses of Type 1 conditional sentences change in the usual way whereas those of Type 2 and 3 do not follow the usual changes; this means that the verb tenses remain unchanged.

e.g. "If I **am** back early, we'll **go** out for dinner," he said.

He said that if he **were/was** back early, we **would go** out for dinner.

"If I **were** you, I **wouldn't say** that," he said.

He said that if he **were** me, he **wouldn't say** that.

"If he **had been** ill, he **wouldn't have come** to work," she said.

She said that if he **had been** ill, he **wouldn't have come** to work.

Inversion in if-clauses

When there is **should**, **were** or **had** in the if-clause, the subject and the auxiliary verb can be inverted and "if" is omitted.

If he should ring, tell him to come at 7.00.

Should he ring, tell him to come at 7. 00.

If I were you, I wouldn't say that.

Were I you, I wouldn't say that.

If I had known earlier, I wouldn't have done such a thing.

Had I known earlier, I wouldn't have done such a thing.

Mixed Conditionals

All types of conditionals can be mixed. Any tense is possible if the context permits it.

| | If-clause | Main clause | |
|--------|---------------------------------------|--|--------|
| Type 1 | <i>If she is honest,</i> | <i>she would have told the truth.</i> | Type 3 |
| Type 2 | <i>If she knew the truth,</i> | <i>she would have told me.</i> | Type 3 |
| Type 3 | <i>If she had accepted,</i> | <i>we would be married now.</i> | Type 2 |
| Type 2 | <i>If he missed the train,</i> | <i>he will be late.</i> | Type 1 |