

Conditional Sentences / If-Clauses

Conditional Sentences are also known as Conditional Clauses or If Clauses. They are used to express that the action in the main clause (without *if*) can only take place if a certain condition (in the clause with *if*) is fulfilled. There are three types of Conditional Sentences.

Conditional Sentence Type 1

→ It is possible and also *very likely* that the condition will be fulfilled.

Form: *if* + Simple Present, will-Future, present or imperative

e.g. If I find her address, I'll send her an invitation.

e.g. If you study hard, you can pass all the exams

e.g. If he behaves well, buy him a present!

Conditional Sentence Type 2

→ It is possible but *very unlikely*, that the condition will be fulfilled.

Form: *if* + Simple Past, Conditional I (= would + Infinitive)

e.g. If I found her address, I would send her an invitation.

Conditional Sentence Type 3

→ It is *impossible* that the condition will be fulfilled because it refers to the past.

Form: *if* + Past Perfect, Conditional II (= would + have + Past Participle)

e.g. If I had found her address, I would have sent her an invitation.

Exceptions

Sometimes Conditional Sentences Type I, II and III can also be used with other tenses.

Exercises on Conditional Sentences

Conditional Sentence Type 1

- If Caroline and Sue _____ (prepare) the salad, Phil _____ (decorate) the house.
- If Sue _____ (chop) the onions for the salad, Caroline _____ (slice) the mushrooms.
- Jane _____ (hoover) the sitting room if Aaron and Tim _____ (move) the furniture.

- If Bob _____ (tidy) up the kitchen, Anita _____ (clean) the toilet.
- Elaine _____ (buy) the drinks if somebody _____ (help) her carry the bottles.

Conditional Sentence Type 2

- If I (live) _____ on a lonely island, I (run) _____ around naked all day.
- We (help) _____ you if we (know) _____ how.
- My brother (buy) _____ a sports car if he (have) _____ the money.
- If I (feel) _____ better, I (go) _____ to the cinema with you.
- If you (go) _____ by bike more often, you (be / not) _____ so flabby.
- She (not / talk) _____ to you if she (be) _____ mad at you.

Conditional Sentence Type 3

- I (write) _____ you a postcard if I (have) _____ your address.
- If I (not / break) _____ my leg, I (take part) _____ in the contest.
- If it (not / start) _____ to rain, we (walk) _____ to the museum.
- We (swim) _____ in the sea if there (not / be) _____ so many sharks there.
- If she (take) _____ the bus, she (not / arrive) _____ on time.

Exceptions for Conditional Sentences

So far you have only learned the basic rules for Conditional Sentences. It depends on the context, however, which tense to use. So sometimes it's possible for example that in an IF Clause Type I another tense than Simple Present is used, e.g. Present Progressive or Present Perfect.

Conditional Sentences Type I (likely)

Condition refers to:	IF Clause	Main Clause
<i>future action</i>	Simple Present If the book is interesting, ...	Future I ...I will buy it. Imperative ...buy it. Modal Auxiliary ...you can buy it.
<i>action going on now</i>	Present Progressive If he is snoring, ...	Future I ...I will wake him up. Imperative ...wake him up. Modal Auxiliary ...you can wake him up.
<i>finished action</i>	Present Perfect If he has moved into his new flat, ...	Future I ...we will visit him. Imperative ...visit him.

Condition refers to:	IF Clause	Main Clause
<i>improbable action</i>	should + Infinitive If she should win this race, ...	Modal Auxiliary ...we can visit him. Future I ...I will congratulate her. Imperative ...congratulate her. Modal Auxiliary ...we can congratulate her.
<i>present facts</i>	Simple Present If he gets what he wants, ...	Simple Present ...he is very nice.

Conditional Sentences Type II (unlikely)

Condition refers to:	IF Clause	Main Clause
<i>present / future event</i>	Simple Past If I had a lot of money, ...	Conditional I ...I would travel around the world.
<i>consequence in the past</i>	Simple Past If I knew him, ...	Conditional II ...I would have said hello.

Conditional Sentences Type II (impossible)

Condition refers to:	IF Clause	Main Clause
<i>present</i>	Past Perfect If I had known it, ...	Conditional I ...I would not be here now.
<i>past</i>	Past Perfect If he had learned for the test, ...	Conditional II ...he would not have failed it.

Exercise:

- I am trying to reach Sue on the phone now, but I'm afraid she is not there because ...
If she (be) at the office, she (answer) the phone.
- A couple of minutes ago, I tried to reach Sue on the phone, but I'm afraid she is not there because ...
If she (be) at the office, she (answer) the phone.
- I want to ring a friend now, but I don't know his phone number.
If I (know) his phone number, I (ring) him.
- A week ago, I wanted to ring a friend, but I don't know his phone number.
If I (know) his phone number, I (ring) him.
- A friend tells me what she is planning to do. I don't think what she is planning is a good idea.
If I (be) you, I (do / not) this.