

# Lesson No. 10

## Conditionals

### KEY POINTS

#### Conditionals

A conditional relates to a sentence that expresses a condition. A conditional sentence is made up of two clauses, the first of which is the conditional clause and it commonly starts with **if**. We refer to it as the **if-clause** (or **if clause**). The if-clause contains a condition, which if fulfilled another action will take place.

The other clause of the conditional sentence is the **main clause** (or **result clause**). The main clause shows the effect of the action taken or if taken in the if-clause. The if-clause usually comes before the main clause although the reverse is possible. A comma comes after the if-clause if the clause comes before the main clause, but if the main clause comes earlier, no comma is required.

In this lesson on conditionals, only the conditional conjunction **if** is used throughout. Conditional sentences using other conditional conjunctions are about similar in constructions. The other conditional conjunctions include **as long as**, **provided**, **unless** and **when**.

#### Examples:

If the building is unsafe, you enter at your own risk.\*

You enter at your own risk **if** the building is unsafe.

(In the first conditional sentence, the if-clause comes before the main clause and a comma is required.)

\*This conditional uses the simple present tense in both parts of the sentence and is described as the fourth type known as the '**zero**' conditional.

There are three main types of conditional.

The First Conditional

The Second Conditional

The Third Conditional

The Zero Conditional

#### The First Conditional

In this **type 1 first conditional**, the simple present tense is used in the if-clause, and the tense in the main clause is the simple future tense.

| If Clause                 | Main Clause               |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| If + simple present tense | Simple future tense       |
| If you leave now,         | you'll arrive home early. |

This conditional shows the outcome (you'll arrive home early) if the condition is fulfilled (if you leave now). We use this conditional when the situation in the **if-clause** appears likely or there is a possibility of it happening.

We can turn the two clauses the other way round so that their positions are reversed as follow:

|                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Simple future tense       | if + simple present tense |
| You'll arrive home early, | if you leave now.         |

Whether the **if-clause** or the **main clause** comes earlier, both are acceptable.

The first conditional sets up a present condition and a probable future outcome.

#### Examples:

- If you go with me, I will pay for your fare.
- If I see him tomorrow, I will tell him the good news.
- If the weather remains fine, we will go to the beach.
- If you continue to feel better, you will be out of the hospital soon.

We may use **going to** in the **first conditional** to refer to a **future event**.

#### Examples:

- If she passes her driving test, we are **going to** celebrate at a good restaurant.
- If you don't hurry, we are **going to** be blacklisted for being late.

## First conditional and modal verb

Modal verbs may be used in the first conditional. The modal verbs have a future meaning and so are used instead of the future tense in the main clause, not in the conditional clause.

| Conditional Clause        | Main Clause                                    |
|---------------------------|--|
| If + simple present tense | can/could; will/would; may/might; shall/should |
| If the weather improves,  | we will go to the park.                        |

The modal verbs are used in type 1 conditional sentences to express willingness, possibility, permission, and suggestion.

### Examples:

- If the movie is boring, we **can** always leave. (Willingness)
- If you help me with this, I **could** finish it earlier. (Probability)
- If she is angry with you, I **would** go myself.
- If you are in a hurry, you **may** leave now. (Permission)
- If we save enough money, we **might** visit you next year.
- If he drives faster, we **shall** arrive there before dark. (Possibility)
- If we want to get there on time, we **should** take a taxi. (Suggestion)

## The Second Conditional

This **type 2 second conditional** is used to talk about the situation now, not in the past although we use the simple past tense in the if-clause. The situation we express is imaginary, unlikely or hypothetical, and is therefore unlikely to happen now or in the future. The second conditional uses the simple past tense in the if-clause and the present conditional in the main clause.

### We use Type 2 conditional to describe:

**An unlikely event or one that is not probable now.**

#### Examples:

If we **earned** more money, we **would** buy a bigger house.

(We are not earning more money.)

If my parents **restored** their broken relationship, I **would** be very happy.

(It's unlikely they will do that, at least not for the foreseeable future.)

### **A purely hypothetical situation.**

#### Examples:

If I **cooked** like her, I **would** open a restaurant.

(I can't cook like her.)

If she **loved** me, I **would** propose to her.

(I don't think she loves me.)

### **An imaginary situation that is unlikely to happen now or in the future.**

#### Examples:

If I **won** the lottery, I **would** buy a luxury yacht.

If I **married** her, I **would** be the happiest man alive.

### **What is absolutely impossible.**

#### Examples:

If your father **were** alive, he **would** be very proud of you.

If I **were** younger, I **would** do things differently.

(The condition beginning with 'If ... were ...' is usually used for something that is impossible to fulfill as it is not real and will always remain unreal, so the subjunctive were is used.)

## **Second conditional and modal verb**

| If Clause                     | Main Clause                    |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| If + simple past tense        | could / would / might / should |
| If you asked your grandmother | she would explain everything.  |

### Examples:

If more police officers **patrolled** in the area, a lot of crime **could** be prevented.



If I told him what happened, he **might** believe me.  
 If we missed the last train, we **should** stay in an inn for the night.

### The Third Conditional

This type 3 conditional expresses a situation in the past that did not happen, so when we use this conditional we are actually imagining a different past that cannot be changed. This unreal situation can never happen, not now or ever.

| Conditional Clause            | Main Clause                               |
|-------------------------------|---|
| If + past perfect tense       | would / could / might + -ed               |
| If you had watched the match, | you would have known how exciting it was. |

With this conditional, we use the past perfect in the conditional clause and the perfect conditional (would have + past participle) in the main clause to:

**express disappointment or regret about things that are not possible to happen now.**

#### Examples:

If you had married his brother instead of him, you could have been a happier person.  
 If you had taken up teaching, you would have been better off.

**Talk about things that should have happened in the past but didn't.**

#### Examples:

If he had gone to the doctor earlier, he wouldn't have got this disability.  
 If I had completed my education, I would have been a person of importance or authority.

**Imagine unrealistic situations.**

#### Examples:

If I had been taller, I would have been a professional basketball player.  
 If I had been a businessman, I wouldn't have led a struggling life.

**Express criticism.**

#### Examples:

If he had got up earlier, he wouldn't have missed the bus.  
 If you had been a bit more patient, you would have got what you wanted.

Other modal verbs such as **could** and **might** can also be used in the main clause.

#### Examples:

If I have known about it, I **could** have done something to help.  
 If the police had arrived earlier, they **might** have apprehended the thief.

### The Zero Conditional

The zero conditional is used to describe something that is always true. The two parts that make up the zero conditional sentences have the same tense: **simple present**.

| if + present simple (conditional clause) | present simple (main clause) |
|--|------------------------------|
| If I mix yellow with blue,               | I get green.                 |
| If you draw back the curtains,           | you let the sunlight in.     |

The positions of the two clauses above are not fixed. In other words, they can change places.

| present simple          | if + present simple            |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| I get green             | if I mix yellow with blue.     |
| You let the sunlight in | if you draw back the curtains. |

When/whenever can be used instead of **if**.

#### Examples:

If/When I mix yellow with blue, I get green.

We can use the **past simple** instead of the **present simple** as above. The past simple must be used in both clauses.

#### Examples:

If he called her, she always **said** she was busy.  
 If I bet on a horse, the horse often **came** last.

- Q 1)** Choose the correct sentence:
- (a) If I knew him better, I would have insisted that he change the hour of the lecture.
  - (b) If I knew him better, I would have insisted that he change the hour of the lecture.
  - (c) If I knew better, I would insist that he change the hour of the lecture.
  - (d) If I knew him better, I would insist for him to change the hour of the lecture.

**ANSWER: (d)**