

## English Grammar – Conditionals (‘if’ statements)

### Zero Conditional (“Factual” Conditional): for habits / facts / truths

We use the **zero conditional** when the result of the condition is always true. For example: take some ice, put it in a pan, heat the pan. What happens? The ice melts (it becomes water). **If you heat ice, it melts.** The Zero Conditional can be used for philosophical conversations.

IF	condition	result
	<b>present simple</b>	<b>present simple</b>
If	<b>you heat ice</b>	<b>it melts.</b>
If	<b>you clear</b> the mind	<b>you heal</b> the soul.

Instead of “**if**”, we can also use “**when**” (*quando*) or “**every time (that)**” (*sempre que*).

### First Conditional: personal prediction for the future

There is a possibility that something will happen in the future. For example: you are at home and you plan to play tennis in the afternoon. You can say: **If it rains, I will stay at home.**

IF	condition	result
	<b>present simple</b>	<b>future simple</b>
If	<b>it rains</b>	<b>I will stay</b> at home.
If	<b>you study</b> hard	<b>you will pass</b> the test.

We can also use “**can**” (instead of “**will**”) for “**permission**” or “**might**” for “**possibility**”;

Examples:

- If you finish work early, you **can go** home early. (permission)
- If it rains tomorrow, I **might go** to the mall. (possibility)

### Second Conditional: hypothetical or imaginary present

We often think about a hypothetical situation, a desire. For example: you do not have a lottery ticket. Is it possible to win? No, it isn't. **If I won the lottery, I would buy a car.**

IF	condition	result
	<b>past simple</b>	<b>conditional present</b>
If	<b>I won</b> the lottery	<b>I would buy</b> a mansion.
If	<b>I spoke</b> English well	<b>I would travel</b> to Australia.

We can also use “**could**” or “**might**” instead of “**would**” for “**possibility**”. Examples:

- If I had a lottery ticket, I **might win**.
- If I won the lottery, I **could stop** working.

**Third Conditional: hypothetical or imaginary past (used for advice or regret)**

We use the Third Conditional to talk about something in the past that did **not** happen. We **imagine** an **unreal** past. We can use it for **advice** or **regret**. For example: last week I bought a lottery ticket, but I did not win. **If I had won the lottery, I would have bought a car.**

IF	condition	result
	<b>past perfect</b>	<b>conditional perfect</b>
If	<b>I had won</b> the lottery	<b>I would have bought</b> a car.
If	<b>I hadn't driven</b> so fast	<b>I would have avoided</b> the accident.

We can also use “**should have**”, “**could have**” or “**might have**” instead of “**would have**” for “**advice**” or “**possibility**”.

Examples:

- If you had had time, you **should have gone** to the doctor. (*advice*)
- If you had come to my house last night, you **could have watched** the film with us. (*possibility*)
- If you had bought a lottery ticket, you **might have won**. (*possibility*)

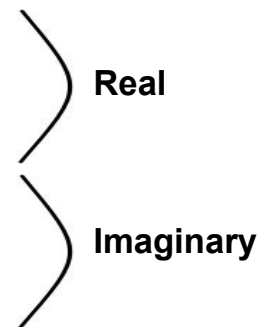
**SUMMARY**

**The zero conditional** talks about facts and things that are generally true.  
(*Present Simple + Present Simple*)

**The first conditional** talks about a possible future for somebody.  
(*Present Simple + Future Simple*)

**The second conditional** talks about a hypothetical present or future situation.  
(*Past Simple + Conditional Present*)

**The third conditional** talks about a hypothetical past event.  
(*Past Perfect + Conditional Perfect*)



Examples:

- Zero:** If you get sick, you go to a doctor.
- First:** If I get sick, I will go to a doctor.
- Second:** If I got sick, I would go to the doctor.
- Third:** If I had been sick, I would have gone to the doctor.

- Recommended videos:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FH3ThwR99LM> (11 mins)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4H3-2smRJJY> (22 mins)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UjiHe1R2cXA> (funny – 1 min)

**Exercise 1.** Name which type of conditional statement these are (Zero, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>):

- If I had \$1000, I would buy a new phone. \_\_\_\_\_
- If you heat water, it boils. \_\_\_\_\_
- If she wasn't sick, she would go to work. \_\_\_\_\_
- If we hadn't left early, we would have missed our flight. \_\_\_\_\_
- If she stops smoking, her health will improve. \_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise 2.** Complete the following using the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. I dream of having a new car. If I \_\_\_\_\_ (have) US\$25,000, I \_\_\_\_\_ (buy) a brand new Ford Fiesta.
2. If I \_\_\_\_\_ (save) \$100 every month, I \_\_\_\_\_ (have) enough money to buy a car in ten years time.
3. If I \_\_\_\_\_ (be/not) so sick, I \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to the Madonna concert yesterday.
4. My girlfriend Sheila left me last week. If I \_\_\_\_\_ (be/not) so stupid, she \_\_\_\_\_ (leave/not) me.

**Exercise 3.** Complete the following sentences by adding a phrase, using an appropriate verb in the correct tense.

1. If you practice speaking English every day, \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_, I wouldn't have hit that tree!
3. If he goes to London this year, \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_, I would be the happiest person in the world!
5. We are so lucky – if you hadn't seen that mugger, \_\_\_\_\_ !

