

What if (hypothetical situations)

The construction "What if?" is a question used to imagine what could have happened in the past (but didn't) or what might happen in the future. It uses the grammatical constructs of the second and third conditionals. For a response, we usually use 'would' or 'could'.

1) In the past – an event that **could have happened, but didn't** (*Past Perfect*).

What if

- the dinosaurs had survived?
A: *We would have dinosaurs in the zoos!*

- the airplane had not been invented?

A: _____

- the English had colonized Brazil?

A: _____

2) In the future – an event that **might happen** (but probably won't) (*Past Simple*).

What if ...

- I stopped eating meat?
A: *You would need to take vitamins.*

- you missed the bus?

A: _____

- you failed your driving test?

A: _____

- Bolsonaro was president again?

A: _____

- a giant meteor hit the Earth tomorrow?

A: _____

- you won the lottery?

A: _____

Note: It is also possible to use the *Present Simple* in this situation, but it gives the impression that there is a strong possibility that it will happen.

Related Vocabulary

E se:

What if he doesn't pass the test?

I will try, but **what if** I don't succeed?

Se der:

If you can, wash the dishes before you go to bed.

If it's possible, wash the dishes before you go to bed.

Talvez:

Will you study medicine next year? **Maybe**.

Perhaps I will study medicine next year.

I **may** study medicine next year, I'm not sure.

I **might** study medicine next year, I'm not sure.

Pode ser:

Would you like a sandwich? **Yes, please**.

Could you give me a lift to work tomorrow? **No problem**.

Can you please wash the dishes? **OK**.

Can I use the computer in ten minutes? **Sure**.