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The one exclusive sign of thorough knowledge is the power of teaching.

Aristotle

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Text 8: Conditionals

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There are many different ways of making sentences with if. It is important to understand the difference between sentences that express real possibilities, and those that express unreal situations.

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Real possibilities

If it rains, we'll stay at home.	If + present simple + will
If you've finished your work, you can go home.	If + present perfect + modal auxiliary verb
If you're feeling ill, go home and get into bed.	If + present continuous + imperative

Unreal situations

You would understand if you came from my country.	If + past simple + would
If I were rich, I wouldn't have any problems.	If + past simple + would
If I stopped smoking, I could run faster.	If + past simple + modal auxiliary verb

*Note that a comma is usual when the if clause comes first.*

## Zero conditional

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Zero conditional sentences refer to 'all time', not just the present or future. they express a situation that is always true. If means when or whenever.

1. If I read too much, I get a headache.
2. If you drop an egg, it breaks.
3. If you spend over 20£ at this supermarket, you get a 5% discount.
4. If you boil water, it evaporates.

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### Time clauses

- ✓ We do not usually use will in time clauses.
  - ✓ Conjunctions of time (when as soon as, before, until, after) are not usually followed by will. We use a present tense even though the reference time is future.
1. I'll phone you when I get home.
  2. As soon as diner is ready, I'll give you a call.
  3. Can I have a word with you before I go?
  4. Wait until I come back.
- ✓ We can use the present perfect if it is important to show that the action in the time clause is finished.
1. When I have read the book, I will lend it to you.
  2. I'll go home after I have done my shopping.

## First conditional

### Form: If + present simple + will

#### Positive

1. If I find a wallet, I will let you know.
2. We'll come and see you on Saturday if the weather is good.

#### Negative

1. You won't pass the exams if you don't revise.
2. If you lose your ticket, you won't be able to go.

#### Question

1. What will you do if you don't find a job?
2. If there isn't a hotel, where will you stay?

If can be replaced by:

1. Unless (= if...not):  
Unless I hear from you, I'll arrive at 8 o'clock.
2. In case (= because of the possibility):  
I'll take my umbrella in case it rains.

### Use

First conditional sentences express a possible condition and its probable result in the future.

Condition (if clause)	Result (result clause)
If I find a shirt that suits you,	I'll buy it for you.
If you can do the homework,	I'll give you a ring.
If you can find my bag,	I might buy you an ice-cream.
If you've never been to the states,	You should try to go there one day

We can use the first conditional to express different functions (all of which expresses a possible condition and a probable result)

If you do that again, I'll kill you	= a threat
Careful! If you touch that, you'll burn yourself.	= a warning
I'll post the letter if you like.	= an offer
If you mend me 100 £, I will love you forever.	= a promise

## Second conditional

Form: If + past simple + would

### Positive

1. If I won some money, I would go around the world.
2. My father would kill me if he could see me now.

### Negative

1. I would give up my job if it didn't like me.
2. If I saw a ghost, I wouldn't talk to it.

### Question

1. What would you do if you saw someone shoplifting?
2. If you needed help, who would you ask?

*Note that was can change to were in the condition clause:*

1. If I were rich, I wouldn't have to work.
2. If he were rich, he wouldn't have to work

## Use

We use the second conditional to express an unreal situation and its probable result.  
The situation or condition is: impossible, imaginary or contrary to known facts.

If I were the president, I would increase taxes.	But it is not very likely that I will be the president.
If my mother was still alive, she would be very proud.	But she's dead.
If Td needed my money, I would lend it to him.	But he doesn't need

✓ *Other modal verbs are possible in the result clause:*

1. I could buy some new clothes if I had some money.
2. If I saved up a little money every week, I might be able to save up for a car.
3. If you wanted that job, you would have to apply very soon.

✓ *If I were you...I'd is used to give advice:*

1. If I were you, I would apologize to her.
2. I'd take it easy for a while if I were you.

First or second conditional ?

Both conditionals refer to the present and future. The difference is about probability not time.	
1. First conditional sentences are real and possible.	2. Second conditional sentences express situations that will probably never happen.

1. If I lose my job, I'll	My company is doing badly: there is strong (probability) possibility of being made redundant.
2. If I lost my job, I'd	Redundancy probably won't happen: I'm just speculating.

1. If there is a nuclear war, we'll	Said by a pessimist.
2. If there were a nuclear war, we would	But I don't think it will happen.

1. If I win the tennis match, I'll	I think it's possible.
2. If I won the tennis match, I'd	But I don't think it will happen.

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