

Second conditional

There are four basic types of conditional sentences in the English language.

Zero conditional: *I take my umbrella if it rains.*

First conditional: *I'll call you if I work late.*

Second conditional: *If the bus didn't arrive on time, I would drive you to the airport.*

Third conditional: *She wouldn't have come if I hadn't invited her.*

Second conditional

The second conditional also refers to the present or future. In second conditional sentences we speculate about situations that will probably never happen.

If I had more time, I would help you. (But I am not free at the moment. I can't help you).

If I won a million dollars, I would start a business of my own. (But I know that it is not realistic.)

We use the past tense in the if clause and would + bare infinitive in the main clause.

Note: the verb *to be* can have a specific form in the if clause.

If I were rich, I wouldn't work. If he were younger, he would marry her.

(But *was* is also possible: *If I was rich, I wouldn't work. If he was younger, he would marry her.*)

But: If I were you, I wouldn't do it. (In this expression, *were* is much more usual than *was*.)

Other forms

Apart from the basic forms (if + the past simple + would), we can use other verb forms.

If I knew his address, I might go and see him.

If we were on holiday, we would be lying on a beach now.

Why are we watching this film? If we were watching the news, it would be more interesting.

Inverted conditionals

We can also make conditional sentences by changing the word order in the if clause.

Were I in your position, I would accept it. (If I were ...)

This form is less common, quite formal and is mostly used in writing.

Note

If is the most frequent expression in the if clauses, but other expressions are possible: even if, provided (that), on condition (that), in case:

I would leave tonight even if you didn't want to.

You could have your birthday party provided that you weren't noisy.

We'd sell you the ranch on condition you paid in cash.

You should take a dictionary with you in case you forgot some words.

Second conditional exercises:

www.e-grammar.org/conditional-2-exercises-pdf/

Our tip: www.e-grammar.org/pdf-books/ All PDF exercises + grammar rules in one place.