

Advanced conditionals

First Conditional: the probable future result of an action

If + Present Simple/Present Continuous,	will/could/might + infinitive.
If we stay here longer,	we'll raise twice as much money for cancer research.

Second Conditional: unlikely (future) or unreal/imaginary (present) situations

If + Past Simple/Past Continuous,	would/could/might + infinitive.
If I met the Queen on the street (unlikely),	I would ask for her autograph.
If I was/were Prime Minister for the day (but I'm not),	I would make everyone pay their fair share of tax.

We can use *should* or *were to* + infinitive to emphasise that the condition is unlikely to happen:

If I **should win** the lottery/If I **were to win** the lottery, I **would give** the money to charity.

Third conditional: unreal/impossible past situations

If + Past Perfect,	would/could/might + have + past participle
If we had known you were coming,	we could have met you at the station. (but we didn't know)
If it hadn't been for the bad weather,	the festival would have been very enjoyable. (but the weather was bad)

Mixed conditionals

We can mix the verb forms from two different conditional patterns, creating mixed conditionals. These are the most common combinations:

- Mixed Conditional Type I: unlikely future/unreal present condition + unreal/imaginary past result.

If + Past Simple/Past Continuous,	would/could/might/should + past participle.
If I was going to win the lottery,	I should have won it by now. (but it's unlikely and I haven't won it)
If I could speak several languages,	I would have got a job as an interpreter. (but I don't speak several languages, so I didn't)

- Mixed Conditional Type II: unreal/imaginary past condition + unreal/imaginary present result.

If + Past Perfect,	would/could/might/should + infinitive.
If extra funding hadn't been found ,	the theatre would no longer exist . (but extra funding was found and the theatre still exists)

Alternatives to if

Apart from *if*, the following conjunctions can be used to introduce conditional clauses:

- as/so long as*, *on condition that*, *provided/providing that*:
We'll make it to the cinema on time **as/so long as** we leave now.
She promised to go to the concert with him **on condition that** he paid for the tickets.
It will be a really good portrait **provided/providing (that)** you put the finishing touches to it.
- in case of/in the event of* + noun:

In case of/In the event of fire, do not use the lift. (= if there is a fire, ...)

COMPARE:

Bring a waterproof jacket in case it rains. (= because of the possibility it might rain)

- unless* (= if ... not/only if):
I **wouldn't** travel by plane **unless** I absolutely had to. (= I would only travel by plane if I had to)
- but for* (= if ... not) in the meaning of 'if it were not for' or 'if it had not been for':

The team would not have won **but for** the constant encouragement of their trainer. (= ... if it hadn't been for ...)

But for my parents' financial support, I don't know how I'd have managed to graduate from the Art Academy.

- otherwise* (= if ... not):
He wasn't in it for the money. **Otherwise**, he would have chosen a different career. (= If he had been in it for the money, he would have ...)
- whether ... or not/whether or not ...* to express alternative conditions:

I would have chosen to study abroad **whether** I had got a scholarship **or not**.

I would have chosen to study abroad **whether or not** I had got a scholarship.

- suppose/supposing (that)*, *imagine*, *say*:
Imagine/Suppose/Supposing you were invited to take part in a reality show, would you accept? (= If someone invited you ...)
Suppose (that)/Supposing we miss the last train. How will we get home?
Imagine/Say/Suppose/Supposing mobile phones had never been invented, life would be very different.
Say we don't get the money. What will happen?

- What if ...*

We can use *What if* in questions in the same way:

What if the talks fail?

What if your best friend was moving abroad, how would you feel?

What if your parents had never met? You wouldn't be here now.