ENGLISH GRAMMAR · DEEP DIVE

The Conditionals, Zero to Mixed

Four patterns and one hybrid: how English uses a past tense to mean 'not true', and why 'If I would have known' is the most common conditional error there is.

B1 · conditionals · if clauses · would

Zero

Always true: a fact or an automatic result.

present + present

If you heat water, it boils.

First

A real possibility in the future.

present + will

If it rains, we will stay in.

Second

Unreal or unlikely, now or in the future.

past + would

If I won the lottery, I would travel.

Third

A past that did not happen.

past perfect + would have

If I had known, I would have told you.

WORD	MEANING	EXAMPLE
unless	'if not': it takes a positive verb	I will go **unless** it rains.
in case	a precaution taken now, not a condition	Take an umbrella **in case** it rains.
as long as	a stated condition (also: provided that)	You can borrow it **as long as** you return it.
mixed	past condition, present result: past perfect + would	If I had studied medicine, I **would be** a doctor now.

1 Put the verb in the right form

Use the verb in brackets. Decide first: is it always true, a real future, unreal now, or an unreal past?

1. If you heat ice, it _____ (melt).
2. If it _____ (rain) tomorrow, we will stay at home.
3. If I _____ (have) more money, I would buy a bike.
4. If she had left earlier, she _____ (catch) the train.
5. If you see Tom, _____ (tell) him I called.
6. If I _____ (be) you, I would apologise.
7. We _____ (not / go) out if it is cold.
8. If I had known about the party, I _____ (come).
9. If he _____ (study) harder last year, he would be at university now.
10. If water _____ (reach) 100 °C, it boils.

2 if, unless, in case or as long as?

Fill each gap with if, unless, in case or as long as.

1 Take a jumper _____ it gets cold later.

2 I'll come to the party _____ I have to work late.

3 You can use my car _____ you drive carefully.

4 _____ you press this button, the door opens.

5 We'll miss the bus _____ we hurry.

6 Write the number down _____ you forget it.

7 You can stay up late _____ you are quiet.

8 _____ it rains, the match will be cancelled.

3 Spot the mistake

Each sentence has one mistake. Write the correct sentence on the line.

1 If it will rain, we will stay inside.

2 If I would have known, I would have helped you.

3 If I would have more time, I would read more.

4 Unless you don't hurry, you will be late.

5 If she had studied, she would pass the exam last week.

6 If you mix red and blue, you would get purple.

Remember Will and would belong in the result half, never in the if clause: If it rains (not will rain), If I had known (not would have known).

4 A short story

Put the verbs in brackets in the right form.

Last summer my friend Ana missed her flight to Rome. If she [1] _____ (leave) home earlier, she [2] _____ (not / miss) it. Now she says: 'If I [3] _____ (have) more holidays this year, I [4] _____ (try) again, but I don't.' Her brother always tells her: 'If you [5] _____ (set) two alarms, you [6] _____ (wake up) on time. It works every time.' So next year she [7] _____ (set) two alarms, and if the taxi [8] _____ (be) late, she will take the train.

5 Real or unreal?

Is the condition real (zero or first) or unreal (second or third)? Write each sentence in the right box.

If it rains, we'll stay in. | If I were rich, I'd travel. | If you heat ice, it melts.

If I'd known, I'd have called. | If she calls, tell her. | If we lived by the sea, we'd swim.

If you're tired, go to bed. | If they'd won, they'd have celebrated.

real	unreal

Where are the answers?

The answers, with an explanation for each one, are in the LinguaBite app. Open this Deep Dive and scroll to Downloads at the bottom of the article: once you have downloaded this worksheet, its answers appear there after a couple of days, so you do the exercises first. You can choose 1, 2 or 3 days in the app's Settings.

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