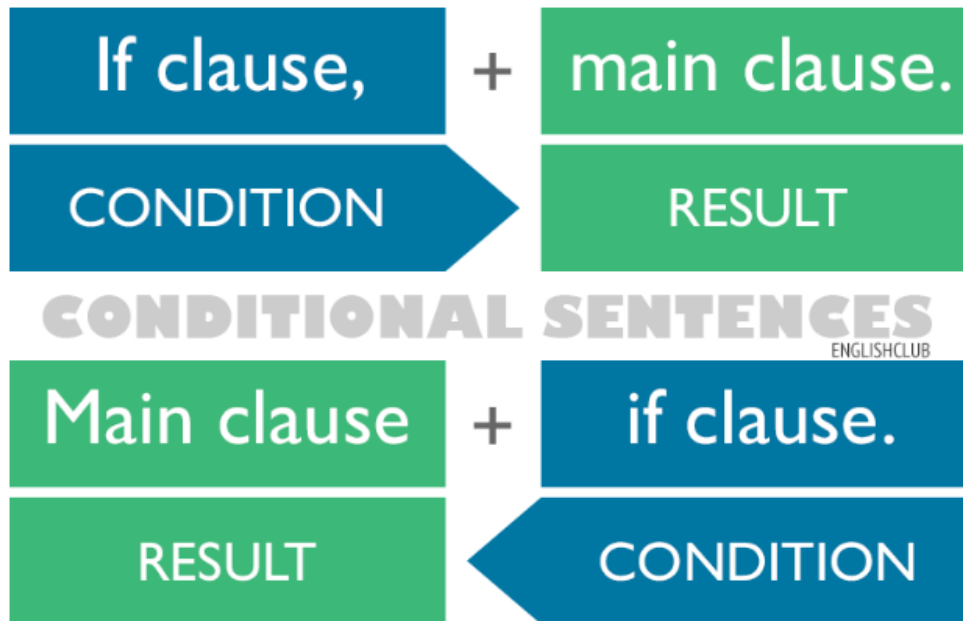


Conditionals



If I see her, I will tell her.

There are several structures in English that we call **conditionals** or *if conditionals*. The word "condition" means "situation or circumstance". **If** a particular condition is true, **then** a particular result happens:

- *if* $y = 3$ *then* $2y = 6$

There are **three basic English conditionals** plus the so-called **zero conditional**. There are some more conditionals that we do not use so often.

conditional type	usage	if-clause	main-clause
1	possible condition + probable result	present simple	<i>will</i> + base verb
2	hypothetical condition + possible result	past simple	<i>would</i> + base verb
3	expired past condition + possible past result	past perfect	<i>would have</i> + past participle
0	real condition + inevitable result	present simple	present simple

Zero Conditional

for certainty

If you heat ice, it melts.

We use the so-called **zero conditional** when the result of the condition is always true, like a scientific fact.

Take some ice. Put it in a saucepan. Heat the saucepan. What happens? The ice melts (it becomes water). You would be surprised if it did not.

<i>if</i>	condition	result
	Present Simple	Present Simple
If	you heat ice,	it melts.

Notice that we are thinking about a result that is always true for this condition. The result of the condition is an absolute **certainty**. We are not thinking about the future or the past, or even the present. We are thinking about a simple fact. We use the **Present Simple** tense to talk about the condition. We also use the **Present Simple** tense to talk about the result. The important thing about the zero conditional is that **the condition always has the same result**.

Look at these example sentences:

<i>if</i>	condition	result
	Present Simple	Present Simple
If	I miss the 8 o'clock bus,	I am late for work.
If	I am late for work,	my boss gets angry.
If	people don't eat,	they get hungry.
If	you heat ice,	does it melt?

result	<i>if</i>	condition
Present Simple		Present Simple
I am late for work	if	I miss the 8 o'clock bus.
My boss gets angry	if	I am late for work.
People get hungry	if	they don't eat.
Does ice melt	if	you heat it?

EnglishClub TIP

We often use **when** instead of **if**, for example: **When I get up late, I miss my bus.**

First Conditional

for real possibility

If I win the lottery, I will buy a car.

We are talking about the future. We are thinking about a particular condition or situation in the future, and the result of this condition. There is a real possibility that this condition will happen. For example, it is morning. You are at home. You plan to play tennis this afternoon. But there are some clouds in the sky. Imagine that it rains. What will you do?

<i>if</i>	condition	result
	Present Simple	will + base verb
If	it <i>rains</i> ,	I <i>will stay</i> at home.

Notice that we are thinking about a future condition. It is not raining yet. But the sky is cloudy and you think that it could rain. We use the **Present Simple** tense to talk about the possible future condition. We use **will + base verb** to talk about the possible future result. The important thing about the first conditional is that **there is a real possibility that the condition will happen**.

Here are some more examples (do you remember the two basic structures: [*if* condition result] and [result *if* condition]?):

<i>if</i>	condition	result
	Present Simple	will + base verb
If	I see Mary,	I will tell her.
If	Tara is free tomorrow,	he will invite her.
If	they do not pass their exam,	their teacher will be sad.
If	it rains tomorrow,	will you stay at home?
If	it rains tomorrow,	what will you do?

result	<i>if</i>	condition
will + base verb		Present Simple
I will tell Mary	if	I see her.
He will invite Tara	if	she is free tomorrow.
Their teacher will be sad	if	they do not pass their exam.
Will you stay at home	if	it rains tomorrow?
What will you do	if	it rains tomorrow?

EnglishClub TIP

Sometimes, we use **shall**, **can** or **may** instead of **will**, for example: *If it's sunny this afternoon, we can play tennis.*

Second Conditional

for unreal possibility

If I won the lottery, I would buy a car.

The **second conditional** is like the first conditional. We are still thinking about the future. We are thinking about a particular condition in the future, and the result of this condition. But there is **not** a real possibility that this condition will happen. For example, you do **not** have a lottery ticket. Is it possible to win? No! No lottery ticket, no win! But maybe you will buy a lottery ticket in the future. So you can think about winning in the future, like a dream. It's not very real, but it's still possible.

<i>if</i>	condition	result
	Past Simple	would + base verb
If	I <i>won</i> the lottery,	I <i>would buy</i> a car.

Notice that we are thinking about a future condition. We use the **Past Simple** tense to talk about the future condition. We use **would + base verb** to talk about the future result. The important thing about the second conditional is that **there is an unreal possibility that the condition will happen**.

Look at these example sentences:

<i>if</i>	condition	result
	Past Simple	would + base verb
If	I married Mary,	I would be happy.
If	Ram became rich,	she would marry him.
If	it snowed next July,	would you be surprised?
If	it snowed next July,	what would you do?

result	<i>if</i>	condition
would + base verb		Past Simple
I would be happy	if	I married Mary.
She would marry Ram	if	he became rich.
Would you be surprised	if	it snowed next July?
What would you do	if	it snowed next July?

EnglishClub TIP

Sometimes, we use **should**, **could** or **might** instead of **would**, for example: *If I won a million dollars, I **could** stop working.*

Third Conditional

for no possibility

If I had won the lottery, I would have bought a car.

The first conditional and second conditionals talk about the future. With the **third conditional** we talk about the **past**. We talk about a condition in the past that did **not** happen. That is why there is no possibility for this condition. The third conditional is also like a dream, but with **no possibility** of the dream coming true.

Last week you bought a lottery ticket. But you did not win. :(

<i>if</i>	condition	result
	Past Perfect	would have + past participle
If	I <i>had won</i> the lottery,	I <i>would have bought</i> a car.

Notice that we are thinking about an impossible past condition. You did not win the lottery. So the condition was not true, and that particular condition can never be true because it is finished. We use the **Past Perfect** tense to talk about the impossible past condition. We use **would have + past participle** to talk about the impossible past result. The important thing about the third conditional is that **both the condition and result are impossible** now.

Look at these example sentences:

<i>if</i>	condition	result
	Past Perfect	would have + past participle
If	I had seen Mary,	I would have told her.
If	Tara had been free yesterday,	I would have invited her.
If	they had not passed their exam,	their teacher would have been sad.
If	it had rained yesterday,	would you have stayed at home?
If	it had rained yesterday,	what would you have done?

result	<i>if</i>	condition
would have + past participle		Past Perfect
I would have told Mary	if	I had seen her.
I would have invited Tara	if	she had been free yesterday.
Their teacher would have been sad	if	they had not passed their exam.
Would you have stayed at home	if	it had rained yesterday?
What would you have done	if	it had rained yesterday?

EnglishClub TIP

Sometimes, we use **should have, could have, might have** instead of **would have**, for example: *If you had bought a lottery ticket, you **might have won**.*