

243 Introduction

A Most conditional sentences have a sub-clause starting with the word *if*. We can use many different verb forms in conditional sentences. Here are some real examples.

- If you haven't got television, you can't watch it.*
- If you go to one of the agencies, they have a lot of temporary jobs.*
- If someone else has requested the book, you would have to give it back.*
- If you lived on the planet Mercury, you would have four birthdays in a single Earth year.*

In general we use verb forms in conditional sentences in the same way as in other kinds of sentences.

If you've finished work for today, you can go home.

Compare: *You've finished work for today, so you can go home.*

In an open condition (when something may or may not happen), we use the present tense: *if you go to one of the agencies*. When we talk about something unreal, we often use the past tense: *if you lived on the planet Mercury*. After an unreal condition, we use *would* in the main clause: *you would have four birthdays*.

B There are some verb forms which often go together. These patterns are usually called Types 1, 2, and 3.

- Type 1: *If the company fails, we will lose our money.* > 245
- Type 2: *If the company failed, we would lose our money.* > 246
- Type 3: *If the company had failed, we would have lost our money.* > 247

There is another pattern which we can call Type 0.

Type 0: *If the company fails, we lose our money.* > 244

C The if-clause usually comes before the main clause, but it can come after it.

If you're in a hurry, you needn't wait for me.

You needn't wait for me if you're in a hurry.

A comma between the clauses is more likely when the if-clause comes first and less likely when it comes at the end.

D We can use conditional sentences in a number of different ways: not only to give information but also, for example, when we request, advise, criticize, and so on.

Use	Example
Requesting:	<i>If you're going into town, could you post this letter for me, please?</i>
Advising:	<i>If your headache persists, you should see a doctor.</i>
Criticizing:	<i>If you'd remembered your passport, we wouldn't be in such a rush.</i>
Suggesting:	<i>We can go for a walk if you like.</i>
Offering:	<i>If you'd like a sandwich, just help yourself.</i>
Warning:	<i>If you don't save the information to disk, you risk losing it.</i>
Threatening:	<i>If you don't leave immediately, I'll call the police.</i>

244 Type 0 conditionals

A The pattern is *if ... + present ... + present*.

- If the doorbell rings, the dog barks.*
- If you add twelve and fifteen, what do you get?*
- The batteries take over if the mains supply fails.*

This pattern means that one thing always follows automatically from another.

B We can use *when* instead of *if* when the meaning is 'each time'.

- If/When I reverse the car, it makes a funny noise.*
- (= Each time I reverse the car, ...)

For more about *if* and *when*, > 249A.

C We can also use Type 0 for the automatic result of a possible future action.

- If the team win tomorrow, they get promotion to a higher league.*

We could also use a Type 1 conditional with *they will get*.

245 Type 1 conditionals

A This is a very common type. The basic pattern is *if ... + present ... + will*.

- If it rains, the reception will take place indoors.*
- If we don't hurry, we won't get there in time.*
- If we want to ask questions, will we be allowed to?*
- The milk will go off if you leave it by the radiator.*

The if-clause expresses an open condition. In the first example, *if it rains* leaves open the question of whether it will rain or not. The present simple (*rains*) expresses future time. For more examples of the present used in this way, e.g. *Let's wait until everyone arrives*, > 59.

We do not normally use *will* in the if-clause.

(NOT *If it will rain, ...*)

But we can use *will* in the if-clause to talk about something that is further in the future than the action of the main clause.

If this medicine does me/will do me good, I'll take it.

For *will* in the if-clause expressing willingness, > 245D.

NOTE

We can use *shall* instead of *will* after *I/we*. > 54A

If we don't hurry, we will/shall miss the train.

B As well as the present simple, we can use the present continuous or perfect.

- If we're having a party, we'll have to invite the neighbours.*
- If I've finished my work by ten, I'll probably watch a film on TV.*

As well as *will*, we can use other modal verbs and similar expressions in the main clause.

- If someone sees me, how can I explain what I'm doing?*
- If you change the time of your flight, you may be charged a fee.*
- I'm going to look silly if I can't answer any of the questions.*

We can also use the imperative in the main clause.

- If you've got a problem, ring our Helpline.*
- If you make a mistake, don't panic.*

C A present tense in the if-clause can refer to the present.

- If you think modelling is glamorous, think again.*
- If it's raining already, I'm definitely not going out.*

D We can use *will* in the if-clause for willingness and *won't* for a refusal.

- If all of you will lend a hand, we'll soon get the job done.*
- If the car won't start, I'll have to ring the garage.*

For more about this meaning of *will* and *won't*, > 54D.

We can use *will* in the if-clause for a request.

- If you'll take a seat, someone will be with you in a moment.*
- If you'll just sign here, please. Thank you.*

E Instead of a Type 1 conditional with *If you + simple present*, we can use this pattern with *and* or *or* in informal speech.

- Touch me and I'll scream.*
- (= If you touch me, I'll scream.)
- Go away, or I'll scream.*
- (= If you don't go away, I'll scream.)

* *If you will come this way,*

I'll take you to the manager's office

→ "will" is not future use, it means "are willing to"

future → will I'll give you £100 if

you stop smoking (stopping smoking is the condition of getting the money → it must happen first)

• it will help you to go on holiday (the help is the result → it follows the gift of money)

CONDITIONAL

CLAUSES

I.