

246 Type 2 conditionals

- A** The basic pattern is *if ... + past ... + would*.
If I had lots of money, I would travel round the world.
I'd tell you the answer if I knew what it was.
If we didn't think the plane was safe, we wouldn't fly it.
 Here the past tense expresses an unreal condition. In the first example, *if I had lots of money* means that really I haven't got lots of money; I am only imagining a situation where I have. For more examples of the past used in this way, > 230.
 We do not normally use *would* in the if-clause.
 (NOT *If I would have lots of money, ...*)
- NOTE**
a We can use *should* instead of *would* after *I/we*.
If I had lots of money, I would/should travel round the world.
Would is more usual. *Should* is rather literary here.
b In informal American speech *would* is sometimes used to express an unreal condition.
If those people would get a nuclear bomb, it would be a great threat to us.
 But this is not acceptable in writing, so you should avoid it.
c We sometimes use *were* instead of *was* in an if-clause. > 231C
If I was/were a billionaire, I would travel round the world.
- B** We also use the Type 2 pattern for a theoretical possibility in the future.
If we caught the early train tomorrow, we'd be in York by lunch time.
If you lost the video, you would have to pay for a new one.
 Here the past tense refers to a possible future action such as catching the early train tomorrow.
 Compare Types 1 and 2.
 Type 1: *If we stay in a hotel, it will be expensive.*
 Type 2: *If we stayed in a hotel, it would be expensive.*
 Type 1 expresses the action as an open possibility – we may or may not stay in a hotel. Type 2 expresses the action as a theoretical possibility only, something more distant from reality.
 Sometimes it can be more polite to use Type 2 rather than Type 1, for example when making a request.
Would it be all right if I brought a friend? ~ Yes, of course.
 Here Type 1 would be more direct and less tentative.
 You might occasionally see a mixture of Types 1 and 2.
If England win against Germany tonight, it would be a miracle.
 However, this is unusual. Normally we do not mix Types 1 and 2.
 (NOT *If I've got lots of money, I would travel round the world.*)

TIP

Do not mix Types 1 and 2.
 Say *If you break it, you will have to pay for it.*
 OR *If you broke it, you would have to pay for it.*
 NOT *If you break it, you would have to pay for it.*
 and NOT *If you broke it, you will have to pay for it.*

NOTE

- a** We can use a mixture of the past tense and *will* when we combine a past condition with a future result.
If they posted the parcel yesterday, it won't get here before Friday.
b A Type 2 pattern can be the past of a Type 1, for example in reported speech.
 Type 1: *Don't go. If you accept the invitation, you will regret it.*
 Type 2: *I told you that if you accepted the invitation, you would regret it.*
reported speech

- D** As well as the past simple, we can use the past continuous or *could* in the if-clause.
If the sun was shining, everything would be perfect.
If I could have my child looked after, I would go out to work.
 As well as *would*, we can use other modal verbs such as *could* or *might* in the main clause.
If I had a light, I could see what I'm doing.
If we could re-start the computer, that might solve the problem.
 We can also use continuous forms.
If Shakespeare was alive today, he would be writing for television.

- E** We can use *would* in the if-clause for a request.
If you wouldn't mind holding the line, I'll try to put you through.
If you'd just sign here, please. Thank you.
 We can also use *would like*.
If you'd like to see the exhibition, it would be nice to go together.

- * In if-clause the difference between \rightarrow *If I come* \times *If I came* \rightarrow is not really a difference of time, they can both refer to the present or future, but the past tense suggests that the situation is less probable, or impossible or imaginary
 ex: \bullet *If I become President, ...* \rightarrow a candidate in an election
If I became President, ... \rightarrow a schoolboy
 \bullet *If I win this race, I'll* \rightarrow fastest runner
If I won this race, I'd \rightarrow slowest runner

247 Type 3 conditionals

- A** The basic pattern is *if ... + past perfect ... + would + perfect*.
If you had taken a taxi, you would have got here in time.
I would have bought that guitar yesterday if I'd had enough money.
My brother would have been promoted if he'd stayed in his job.
We'd have gone to the talk if we'd known about it.
 (= We would have gone if we had known.)
 Here the verb forms refer to something unreal, to an imaginary past action. In the first example, *if you had taken a taxi* means that really you didn't take a taxi; I am only imagining a situation where you did. For more examples of the past perfect used in this way, > 230C.
 We cannot use the past simple or the past perfect in the main clause.
 (NOT *If you had taken a taxi, you had got here in time.*)
 And we do not normally use *would* in the if-clause.
 (NOT *If you would have taken a taxi, you would have got here in time.*)
NOTE
 You may occasionally hear a form such as *would have taken* (OR *had have taken*) in an if-clause in informal speech. But many people regard it as incorrect, and it is not acceptable in writing, so you should avoid it.
- B** We can use *could* + perfect in the if-clause.
If I could have warned you in time, I would have done.
 As well as *would*, we can use other modal verbs such as *could* or *might* in the main clause.
If I'd written the address down, I could have saved myself some trouble.
The plan might not have worked if we hadn't had a piece of luck.
 We can also use continuous forms.
If he hadn't been evicted by his landlord, he wouldn't have been sleeping on the streets.
- C** We can mix Types 2 and 3.
If Tom was ambitious, he would have found himself a better job years ago.
If you hadn't woken me up in the night, I wouldn't feel so tired now.
 We can also use a Type 1 condition with a Type 3 main clause.
If you know London so well, you shouldn't have got so hopelessly lost.

CONDITIONAL

CLAUSES

Requests: *Will it be ok if I bring a friend?* \rightarrow more direct
Would it be ok if I brought a friend? \rightarrow less direct, more polite