Conditional sentences talk about a result that depends on a condition. They have two parts: the if part (the condition) and the main part (the result). English has four main types, and each one answers one simple question: is it always true, likely, imagined, or already finished?

Zero conditional - facts that are always true

Form: If + present simple, present simple.

Use it for science, habits and things that are always true when the condition happens.

- *If you heat ice, it melts.*
- *If I drink coffee late, I cannot sleep.*

First conditional - real and likely in the future

Form: If + present simple, will + base verb.

Use it for real plans and likely results in the future. You can also use can, may or an imperative in the main part.

- *If it rains tomorrow, we will stay at home.*
- *If you finish early, call me and we can eat together.*

Second conditional - imagined situations now

Form: If + past simple, would + base verb.

Use it for unreal or unlikely situations in the present or future. With the verb be, we usually use were for every person in careful English: If I were you is a set phrase for giving advice.

- *If I had a car, I would drive to the mountains every weekend.*
- *If I were you, I would tell the truth.*

Third conditional - imagining a different past

Form: If + past perfect, would have + past participle.

Use it to think back and imagine how the past could have been different. The real past cannot change, so these sentences often carry a feeling of regret or relief.

- *If you had left earlier, you would have caught the train.*
- *If we had saved more money, we would have bought a bigger house.*

Good things to remember

- The if part can come second. Then you do not need a comma: We will stay at home if it rains.

- Do n

Quick practice - complete the sentences

1. If you mix blue and yellow, you ___ green. (get)

2. If she studies hard, she ___ the exam. (pass, future)
3. If I ___ rich, I would travel the world. (be)
4. If they had brought a map, they ___ lost. (not get, imagined past)
5. Unless it stops raining, we ___ at home. (stay, future)

Answers

1. get - zero conditional.
2. will pass - first conditional.
3. were - second conditional.
4. would not have got - third conditional.
5. will stay - unless means if not, first conditional.