Zero, first, second, third and mixed conditionals

All conditional types – table

	use	*if* clause (condition)	,	main clause (result)
Type 0	to talk about things that are always true or that normally happen	**present (simple, continuous, perfect)** If something happens ... ❶ *If the food is out of date ...* ❷ *If I've drunk ...* ❸ *If you are talking ...*	,	**present (simple, continuous, perfect)** ... the result is true. ❶ *... I don't eat it.* ❷ *... I don't drive.* ❸ *... I can't concentrate.*
Type 1	to talk about a probable event happening in the future	**present (simple, continuous, perfect)** If something happens ... ❶ *If you study ...* ❷ *If he doesn't call you ...* ❸ *If you've come to class ...* ❹ *If we win ...*	,	**future, imperative, *can, must, might, may*** ... the result will be true. ❶ *... you will pass the exam.* ❷ *... tell me immediately.* ❸ *... the exam is going to be easy.* ❹ *... we'll be celebrating soon.*
Type 2	to talk about present or future hypothetical or unreal situations	**past (simple, continuous)** If something happened ... ❶ *If I won the lottery ...* ❷ *If you weren't talking ...* ❸ *If I were you ...*	,	***would/could/might* + infinitive** ... the result would be true. ❶ *... I would buy a yatch.* ❷ *... I could concentrate.* ❸ *... I might wait before taking a decision.*
Type 3	to talk about past hypothetical or unreal situations	**past perfect (simple, continuous)** If something had happened ... ❶ *If you had come to class ...* ❷ *If he hadn't been wearing a helmet...*	,	***would/could/might* + have + past participle** ... the result would have been true. ❶ *... you would have passed the exam.* ❷ *... he could have died.*
Mixed conditionals	to talk about a past hypothetical or unreal situation with a present result	**past perfect (simple, continuous)** If something had happened ... ❶ *If I had won the lottery ...* ❷ *If I hadn't been wearing a helmet...*	,	***would/could/might* + infinitive** ... the result would be true. ❶ *... now I would be rich.* ❷ *... I might be dead now.*
	to talk about a present hypothetical or unreal situation with a past result	**past (simple, continuous)** If something happened ... ❶ *If I spoke German more fluently ...* ❷ *If I wasn't a woman ...*	,	***would/could/might* + have + past participle** ... the result would have been true. ❶ *... I mignt not have had such problems.* ❷ *... They would have given me the job.*

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Mixed conditionals

We use mixed conditionals if we want to mix talking about the present and the past in the same sentence. The mixed conditional is a combination of the **second and the third conditional**:

⇨ We can use past simple or continuous in the **if**-clause (to refer to the present or future), and **would/should/might have + past participle** in the main clause (to refer to the past).

⇨ We can also use past perfect in the **if**-clause (to refer to the past), and **would/should/might + infinitive** (to refer to the present).

- *If I **didn't have** (second conditional) so much work, I **would have gone** (third conditional) to the party last night.*
- *If I **spoke** (second conditional) German, I **would have understood** (third conditional) them.*
- *If I **had won** (third conditional) the lottery, I **would be** (second conditional) rich.*
- *If I **hadn't dropped** (third conditional) school, I **could have** (second conditional) a better job now.*

Alternatives to if in conditional sentences

As long as / provided (that) / providing (that) / on condition (that) / only if

We can use the expressions **as long as, provided/providing (that), on condition (that),** or **only if** instead of **if** when we want to emphasize the condition that needs to be present so that something can happen or be done.

- *I'll tell you what really happened **as long as** you keep the secret.*
- *I'll lend you the money **provided (that)** you pay me back next month.*
- *They will speak to the press **on condition (that)** they remain anonymous sources.*
- *We will invest the money, but **only if** you can prove that it's a safe investment.*

Whether or not

We use **whether or not** when there are two alternatives and we want to say that something will happen or will be true in any of those two alternatives. Compare:

- *I'll help him **if** he needs me.* (=I will help him only if he needs me.)
- *I'll help him **whether or not** he needs me.* (I will help him if he needs me, and I will help him if he doesn't need me, too.)

Even if

We also use **even if** with a similar meaning to 'whether or not'. It is used to emphasize that something will still be true or will happen if another thing happens.

- ***Even if** you apologise, he'll never forgive you.* (=Whether or not you apologise, he'll never forgive you.)

Suppose/supposing

We normally use **suppose** or **supposing** at the beginning of a sentence to make someone imagine a situation. It means 'what would happen if', or simply 'if' (imagining a situation).

- *Supposing I got a job, I wouldn't be able to travel with you next summer.*
- *Suppose she doesn't believe you, what would you do then?*

Inversion in conditional sentences

Should you find

In **first conditional** sentences it's possible to use **should** at the beginning of the sentence instead of **if**. This form is formal and it's quite common with an imperative form in the main clause.

- *Should you find the answer, please let me know as soon as possible.* (=If you find the answer)
- *Should you change your mind, you know where to contact us.* (=If you change your mind)

Had we arrived

In **third conditional** sentences, we can invert the auxiliary verb **had** and leave **if** out. *Had we arrived* = If we had arrived.

- *Had we arrived earlier, we could have prevented the incident.*
- *Had they looked further into the data, they might have realised there was a mistake.*

Were we to announce

We can also find cases of inversion with this structure: **were** + subject + **to.** + infinitive. It is used to talk about f**uture improbable events** (like the **second conditional**).

- *Were we to announce the truth, we would receive a lot of criticism.* (=If we announced …)
- *Were they to buy a new house, they would need to sell the old one first.* (=If they bought …)

Negative forms: **should I not, had we not, were we not**

When **should**, **had** or **were** are negative, contracted forms are not possible, and **not** is used after the subject.

- *Should you not wish to retake the test, you must let us know before the end of June.* (NOT ~~Shouldn't you wish~~)
- *Had you not refused my invitation, we would have had the most incredible time in our lives.* (NOT ~~Hadn't you refused~~)
- *Were you not my brother, I would call the police.* (NOT ~~Weren't you~~)