

Conditionals: revision

Grammar Lesson, Examples & 30 Practice Questions

Conditionals: Revision

Conditionals are sentences with two parts: a **condition** (the "if" part) and a **result** (what happens because of that condition). We use conditionals to talk about possibilities, hypothetical situations, regrets, and consequences. English has several types of conditional sentences, and at B2 level it is important to understand how each one works and when to use it.

In this lesson, we will revise all the main conditional structures — Zero, First, Second, and Third — as well as the **Mixed Conditional**, which combines elements from different types. We will look at their forms, meanings, and common mistakes.

Here are some quick examples to get started:

- *If you heat water to 100°C, it boils.* (Zero Conditional — general truth)
- *If it rains tomorrow, I will stay at home.* (First Conditional — real possibility)
- *If I had more time, I would learn the piano.* (Second Conditional — unreal present)
- *If she had studied harder, she would have passed the exam.* (Third Conditional — unreal past)
- *If I had saved more money, I would be travelling the world now.* (Mixed Conditional)

The Zero Conditional

Meaning

We use the **Zero Conditional** to talk about things that are **always true** — scientific facts, general rules, and habits. Both parts of the sentence describe something that is always the result of the condition.

Structure

If + present simple, present simple

The word *when* can often replace *if* in Zero Conditionals without changing the meaning significantly.

If clause (condition)	Result clause
If you freeze water,	it turns to ice.
If people don't sleep enough,	they feel tired.
If the temperature drops below zero,	pipes can burst.
When I drink too much coffee,	I can't sleep.

Key Points

- Use the **present simple** in both clauses.
- The result is **always** or **generally** true.
- Both clauses can come first: *Water turns to ice if you freeze it.*
- Use a comma after the *if* clause when it comes first.

The First Conditional

Meaning

We use the **First Conditional** to talk about **real and possible future situations**. The speaker believes the condition is realistic — it might genuinely happen.

Structure

If + present simple, will + base verb

We can also use *unless*, *as long as*, *provided that*, and *in case* instead of *if* in first conditional sentences.

If clause (condition)	Result clause
If she arrives on time,	we will catch the train.
If you don't hurry,	you will miss the bus.
If it is sunny at the weekend,	they will go to the beach.
Unless you study,	you won't pass the test.
As long as you work hard,	you will succeed.

Variations with Modal Verbs

In the result clause, you can use other modal verbs instead of *will* to change the level of certainty or to give advice:

- *If you ask him, he **might** help you.* (possibility)
- *If she calls, you **should** answer.* (advice)
- *If it is warm, we **can** sit outside.* (ability/permission)

The Second Conditional

Meaning

We use the **Second Conditional** to talk about **unreal, imaginary, or hypothetical present or future situations**. The speaker does not expect the condition to happen, or knows it is not true right now.

Structure

If + past simple, would + base verb

If clause (condition)	Result clause
If I won the lottery,	I would buy a house by the sea.
If she spoke French,	she would apply for the job in Paris.
If we had a bigger car,	we would all travel together.
If he weren't so busy,	he would spend more time with his family.

Special Note: "Were" instead of "Was"

In formal and written English, we use **were** for all subjects in the second conditional — including *I, he, she, and it*. In informal spoken English, *was* is also commonly heard.

- *If I **were** you, I would apologise.* (formal/correct)
- *If I **was** you, I would apologise.* (informal/spoken)
- *If she **were** taller, she would be a model.* (formal)

The phrase "**If I were you, ...**" is a very common way to give advice.

Variations with Modal Verbs

You can also use *could* or *might* in the result clause:

- *If I had more experience, I **could** apply for that position.*
- *If it stopped raining, we **might** go for a walk.*

The Third Conditional

Meaning

We use the **Third Conditional** to talk about **unreal past situations** — things that did not happen. We imagine a different past and think about what the result would have been. It is often used to express **regret** or to **criticise** a past action.

Structure

If + past perfect, would have + past participle

If clause (condition)	Result clause
If she had left earlier,	she would have caught the flight.
If they had listened to the advice,	they would have avoided the problem.
If I had known about the meeting,	I would have attended.
If he hadn't been so careless,	he wouldn't have broken his phone.

Variations with Modal Verbs

You can use *could have* or *might have* in the result clause:

- *If they had practised more, they **could have** won the tournament.*
- *If I had checked the map, I **might not have** got lost.*

Contractions in Third Conditionals

In spoken English, we often use contractions. Note these carefully:

- *If she'd studied harder, she'd have passed. (she'd = she had in the if clause; she'd = she would in the result)*
- *They wouldn't have been late if they'd left on time.*

The Mixed Conditional

Meaning

A **Mixed Conditional** combines elements from the second and third conditionals. We use it when the **time in the condition clause is different from the time in the result clause**. There are two common patterns.

Pattern 1: Past condition → Present result

If + past perfect, would + base verb

This describes a past event that is affecting the present situation.

- *If she had studied medicine, she **would be** a doctor now. (She didn't study medicine in the past, so she isn't a doctor now.)*
- *If he hadn't moved abroad, he **would still be living** here.*
- *If I hadn't taken that job, I **wouldn't have** met my partner.*

Pattern 2: Present condition → Past result

If + past simple, would have + past participle

This describes an unreal present situation and its imagined effect on the past.

- *If I were more organised, I **would have finished** the project by now. (I am not organised, and that is why I haven't finished it.)*
- *If she were braver, she **would have spoken** up at the meeting.*

Type	If clause	Result clause	Meaning
Mixed 1	Past perfect	would + base verb	Past cause → present effect
Mixed 2	Past simple	would have + past participle	Present cause → past effect

Complete Overview Table

Conditional Type	If Clause	Result Clause	Use	Example
Zero	Present simple	Present simple	General truths and facts	<i>If you mix colours, you get new ones.</i>
First	Present simple	will + base verb	Real future possibilities	<i>If I finish early, I will call you.</i>
Second	Past simple	would + base verb	Unreal present/future situations	<i>If I had wings, I would fly.</i>
Third	Past perfect	would have + past participle	Unreal past situations/regrets	<i>If he had come, he would have enjoyed it.</i>
Mixed (past → present)	Past perfect	would + base verb	Past event affecting the present	<i>If I had slept, I would feel better now.</i>
Mixed (present → past)	Past simple	would have + past participle	Present state affecting imagined past	<i>If she were confident, she would have spoken.</i>

Important Differences and Special Cases

First vs Second Conditional

The difference between the First and Second Conditional is about **how likely** the speaker thinks the situation is:

- *If it rains, I will take an umbrella.* (First — I think it might actually rain.)
- *If it rained every day, I would move house.* (Second — I don't actually expect this to happen; it's hypothetical.)

Unless in Conditionals

Unless means *if not*. It is used in Zero and First Conditionals.

- *Unless you hurry, we will miss the train.* = *If you don't hurry, we will miss the train.*
- *Unless it rains, we will eat outside.* = *If it doesn't rain, we will eat outside.*

Do **not** use *unless* in Third Conditionals. Use *if ... hadn't* instead.

Other Conditional Linkers

Instead of *if*, you can use other expressions to introduce conditions, especially in First Conditionals:

- **Provided (that) / Providing (that):** *You can borrow the car provided that you fill it up with petrol.*
- **As long as:** *I will help you as long as you are honest with me.*
- **On condition that:** *He agreed to come on condition that he could leave early.*
- **In case:** *Take an umbrella in case it rains.* (Note: *in case* is not exactly the same as *if* — it means "because something might happen")

Wish vs Conditional

We often use *wish* to express the same feelings as second and third conditionals. Notice the parallel structures:

- *If I were rich, I would travel more.* → *I wish I were rich.*
- *If she had told me, I would have helped.* → *I wish she had told me.*

Common Mistakes

✗ *If I will see him, I will tell him.*

✓ **If I see him, I will tell him.** (Do not use *will* in the *if* clause of a First Conditional.)

✗ *If she would study more, she would pass.*

✓ **If she studied more, she would pass.** (Do not use *would* in the *if* clause of a Second Conditional.)

✗ *If I had known, I would told you.*

✓ **If I had known, I would have told you.** (The result clause in a Third Conditional needs *would have* + past participle.)

✗ *If he didn't lie, she would have trusted him.*

✓ **If he hadn't lied, she would have trusted him.** (To refer to an unreal past event, use the past perfect in the *if* clause.)

✗ *Unless you don't hurry, you'll be late.*

✓ **Unless you hurry, you'll be late.** (*Unless* already means *if not* — do not add another negative.)

✗ *If I was a bird, I would fly to you.* (formal writing)

✓ **If I were a bird, I would fly to you.** (Use *were* for all subjects in formal Second Conditionals.)

✗ *If she had more confidence now, she would have applied for the job last year.* (if the sentence means her current personality explains a past action, the structure is correct as a mixed conditional — but students often confuse the time references)

✓ **Check carefully which time each clause refers to before choosing your conditional type.**

Conditionals: Revision — Quick Summary

- The **Zero Conditional** uses present simple + present simple for general truths.
- The **First Conditional** uses present simple + *will* + base verb for real future possibilities.
- The **Second Conditional** uses past simple + *would* + base verb for unreal present or future situations.
- The **Third Conditional** uses past perfect + *would have* + past participle for unreal past situations and regrets.
- **Mixed Conditionals** combine past and present time references when the condition and the result belong to different time frames.
- Never use *will* or *would* in the *if* clause (except in very formal polite requests).
- *Unless*, *as long as*, *provided that*, and *in case* can replace or extend *if* with slightly different meanings.
- Use **were** (not *was*) for all subjects in formal Second Conditionals.
- The Third Conditional always requires **would have + past participle** in the result clause — never just *would* + base verb.

Now practise **conditionals** in the exercises below.

Conditionals: revision – Practice Test

B2 | 30 Questions: Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-Gap & Fill-in-the-Blank

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 If I had studied harder, I ____ the exam.

- A** would pass
- B** will pass
- C** would have passed
- D** had passed

2 Unless you ____ now, you will miss the bus.

- A** leave
- B** left
- C** will leave
- D** had left

3 If water ____ to 100°C, it boils.

- A** heated
- B** heats
- C** would heat
- D** had heated

4 She talks to him as if she ____ him for years.

- A** knows
- B** known
- C** had known
- D** would know

5 If I were you, I ____ that job offer.

- A** accept
- B** will accept
- C** would accept
- D** would have accepted

6 Provided that you ____ all the requirements, you will get the scholarship.

- A** met
- B** meet
- C** had met
- D** would meet

7 If they ____ us earlier, we could have helped them.

- A** told
- B** tell
- C** had told
- D** would tell

8 I wish I ____ more time to travel when I was younger.

- A** have
- B** had
- C** would have
- D** had had

9 Should you need any assistance, please ____ us at any time.

- A** contact
- B** contacted
- C** to contact
- D** contacting

10 Even if he ____ the truth, nobody would believe him.

- A** tells
- B** told
- C** had told
- D** will tell

Part 2: Fill in the Gap (Questions 11–20)

11 If I ____ more time yesterday, I would have finished the project.

- A** had had
- B** had
- C** would have

12 She ____ the bus if she had left the house five minutes earlier.

- A** would have caught
- B** would catch
- C** had caught

13 If water ____ to 100°C, it boils.

- A** is heated
- B** was heated
- C** had been heated

14 If he ____ harder, he might pass his exams.

- A** studied
- B** had studied
- C** studies

15 Unless you ____ your password, you won't be able to log in.

- A** remember
- B** don't remember
- C** will remember

16 I wish I ____ to the concert last night — everyone said it was amazing.

- A** had gone
- B** went
- C** would have gone

17 If I were you, I ____ that job offer immediately.

- A** would accept
- B** will accept
- C** had accepted

18 Provided that you ____ all the requirements, your application will be approved.

- A** meet
- B** met
- C** had met

19 If they ____ the map more carefully, they wouldn't have got lost.

- A** had read
- B** read
- C** would read

20 She talks to her plants as if they ____ able to understand her.

- A** were
- B** are
- C** had been

Part 3: Fill in the Blank (Questions 21–30)

21 If she _____ harder, she would have passed the exam.

22 Unless you _____ now, you will miss the last train.

23 If I _____ you, I would apologise to her immediately.

24 She would be healthier now if she _____ smoking ten years ago.

25 Provided that you _____ your work on time, you can leave early today.

26 If they _____ the flight, they would be on the beach right now.

27 I _____ you as soon as I arrive at the hotel.

28 If water _____ 100 degrees Celsius, it boils.

29 Had I known about the meeting, I _____ it.

30 If you _____ any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Answer Key & Explanations

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Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **C** Correct Answer: would have passed ✓ Explanation: This is a third conditional, used for hypothetical situations in the past. The structure is If + past perfect, would have + past participle. Since studying harder didn't happen, the result is also imaginary.
2. **A** Correct Answer: leave ✓ Explanation: Unless means if not and is used in first conditional sentences. The structure requires a present simple verb in the unless clause: Unless you leave, you will miss the bus.
3. **B** Correct Answer: heats ✓ Explanation: This is a zero conditional, used for general truths and scientific facts. Both clauses use the present simple: If water heats to 100°C, it boils.
4. **C** Correct Answer: had known ✓ Explanation: The phrase as if followed by a past perfect expresses an unreal or imaginary situation. She talks to him as if she had known him for years implies she actually hasn't known him long.
5. **C** Correct Answer: would accept ✓ Explanation: If I were you is a classic second conditional structure used to give advice about hypothetical present situations. The main clause uses would + infinitive: I would accept that job offer.
6. **B** Correct Answer: meet ✓ Explanation: Provided that is a conditional conjunction similar to if, used in first conditional sentences. It requires present simple in the conditional clause: Provided that you meet all the requirements, you will get the scholarship.
7. **C** Correct Answer: had told ✓ Explanation: This is a third conditional, expressing a past situation that did not happen. The if clause uses the past perfect: If they had told us earlier, we could have helped them.
8. **D** Correct Answer: had had ✓ Explanation: I wish used for regrets about the past requires the past perfect. Had had is the past perfect of have: I wish I had had more time to travel shows the speaker regrets not having had that time.
9. **A** Correct Answer: contact ✓ Explanation: Should + subject + infinitive is a formal inverted conditional equivalent to If you should need. The main clause uses the bare infinitive: Should you need any assistance, please contact us.
10. **B** Correct Answer: told ✓ Explanation: Even if introduces a second conditional to talk about a hypothetical or unlikely present situation. The if clause uses the past simple: Even if he told the truth, nobody would believe him implies it's unlikely or imaginary.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** Correct Answer: had had ✓ Explanation: This is a Third Conditional, used to talk about unreal past situations. The if-clause requires past perfect (had + past participle). If I had had more time yesterday, I would have finished the project.
12. **A** Correct Answer: would have caught ✓ Explanation: In the Third Conditional, the main clause uses would have + past participle to describe an unreal past result. She would have caught the bus if she had left earlier.
13. **A** Correct Answer: is heated ✓ Explanation: This is a Zero Conditional, used for general truths and scientific facts. Both clauses use the present simple. If water is heated to 100°C, it boils.
14. **A** Correct Answer: studied ✓ Explanation: This is a Second Conditional, used for unreal or unlikely present/future situations. The if-clause uses the past simple, and the main clause uses might/would + base verb. If he studied harder, he might pass his exams.
15. **A** Correct Answer: remember ✓ Explanation: Unless means if not, so we do not add another negative. The clause after unless uses the present simple in a First Conditional. Unless you remember your password, you won't log in.
16. **A** Correct Answer: had gone ✓ Explanation: After I wish referring to a past regret, we use the past perfect (had + past participle). I wish I had gone to the concert last night.
17. **A** Correct Answer: would accept ✓ Explanation: If I were you signals a Second Conditional used for advice about an unreal present situation. The main clause requires would + base verb. If I were you, I would accept that job offer immediately.
18. **A** Correct Answer: meet ✓ Explanation: Provided that is a conditional conjunction similar to if. In a First Conditional expressing a real future possibility, the condition clause uses the present simple. Provided that you meet all the requirements, your application will be approved.
19. **A** Correct Answer: had read ✓ Explanation: This is a Third Conditional describing an unreal past situation. The if-clause uses the past perfect (had + past participle). If they had read the map more carefully, they wouldn't have got lost.
20. **A** Correct Answer: were ✓ Explanation: After as if, we use the past simple subjunctive (were) to describe an unreal or imaginary present situation. She talks to her plants as if they were able to understand her.

Part 3: Fill in the Blank

21. **had studied** Correct Answer: had studied ✓ Explanation: This is a Third Conditional, used for hypothetical situations in the past. The if-clause requires had + past participle: If she had studied harder...
22. **leave** Correct Answer: leave ✓ Explanation: Unless means if not, and it is used with a First Conditional. The verb in the unless-clause is in the present simple: Unless you leave now...

23. **were** Correct Answer: were ✓ Explanation: This is a Second Conditional giving advice. We use were (not was) for all subjects in formal or standard English: If I were you...
24. **had not started** Correct Answer: had not started ✓ Explanation: This is a Mixed Conditional. The if-clause refers to a past action (had + past participle) while the main clause refers to a present result (would + infinitive): ...if she had not started smoking.
25. **finish** Correct Answer: finish ✓ Explanation: Provided that is a conditional conjunction meaning on the condition that. Like if in a First Conditional, it is followed by the present simple: Provided that you finish...
26. **had not missed** Correct Answer: had not missed ✓ Explanation: This is a Mixed Conditional. The if-clause describes a past event (had + past participle) and the result clause describes the present situation (would + be): ...they would be on the beach right now.
27. **will call** Correct Answer: will call ✓ Explanation: In a First Conditional or time clause, the main clause uses will + infinitive to express a future result: I will call you as soon as I arrive...
28. **reaches** Correct Answer: reaches ✓ Explanation: This is a Zero Conditional, used for scientific facts and general truths. Both clauses use the present simple: If water reaches 100°C, it boils.
29. **would have attended** Correct Answer: would have attended ✓ Explanation: This is an inverted Third Conditional. When the if-clause is omitted and had is placed first, the main clause still requires would have + past participle: ...I would have attended it.
30. **should need** Correct Answer: should need ✓ Explanation: Should + infinitive in the if-clause gives the condition a more formal or polite tone, suggesting the situation is possible but unlikely. It is often used in formal writing: If you should need assistance...

Score Guide

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 27–30 Correct | Excellent! You have mastered this topic. |
| 23–26 Correct | Very good! Review the rules you missed. |
| 18–22 Correct | Good start. Re-read the lesson and examples. |
| 0–17 Correct | Study the lesson again before retaking the test. |