

Second Conditional

Grammar Lesson, Examples & 30 Practice Questions

Second Conditional

The **second conditional** is used to talk about imaginary or unlikely situations in the present or future. We use it to describe situations that are *not real* — things that are just dreams, wishes, or hypothetical ideas.

For example, imagine you do not have a dog, but you think about what life would be like if you did. Or imagine you do not have a lot of money, but you think about what you would do if you did. These are perfect situations for the **second conditional**.

Here are two simple examples:

- *If I had a dog, I would take it to the park every day.* (But I don't have a dog — it's imaginary.)
- *If she lived near the beach, she would swim every morning.* (But she doesn't live near the beach — it's not real.)

The second conditional has **two parts**: the **if-clause** (the imaginary situation) and the **main clause** (the imaginary result). Let's look at the rules step by step.

Rule Breakdown

Part 1: The If-Clause (The Imaginary Situation)

The **if-clause** is the part of the sentence that starts with **if**. It describes an imaginary or unlikely situation. In this part, we use the **past simple** tense — but it does *not* mean the past! It just helps show that the situation is not real.

Structure of the if-clause:

If + subject + past simple verb

Examples of the if-clause on its own:

- *If I had a million pounds...*
- *If she knew the answer...*
- *If we lived in Spain...*
- *If he had more time...*

Important: The verb in the if-clause is in the **past simple** form. For regular verbs, add **-ed**. For irregular verbs, use the special past form (e.g. have → had, know → knew, live → lived).

Part 2: The Main Clause (The Imaginary Result)

The **main clause** tells us the imaginary result. It describes what would happen *if* the situation in the if-clause were true. In this part, we use **would + base verb**.

A **base verb** is the simple, basic form of a verb with no endings — for example: *go, buy, eat, live, travel*.

Structure of the main clause:

Subject + would + base verb

Examples of the main clause on its own:

- ...*I would travel around the world.*
- ...*she would tell us.*
- ...*we would speak Spanish every day.*
- ...*he would learn a new language.*

Putting the Two Parts Together

Now let's put the if-clause and the main clause together to make a full **second conditional** sentence.

Full structure:

If + subject + past simple verb, subject + would + base verb.

Notice the **comma (,)** between the two parts when the if-clause comes first.

- *If I had a million pounds, I would travel around the world.*
- *If she knew the answer, she would tell us.*
- *If we lived in Spain, we would speak Spanish every day.*
- *If he had more time, he would learn a new language.*

Second Conditional: Sentence Patterns

Here is the full pattern clearly shown:

If-clause first:

If + subject + past simple, subject + would + base verb.

If I had a car, I would drive to work.

Main clause first (no comma needed):

Subject + would + base verb + if + subject + past simple.

I would drive to work if I had a car.

Both sentences mean exactly the same thing! When the **if-clause comes first**, we use a comma. When the **main clause comes first**, we do **not** need a comma.

Second Conditional: Examples Table

If-Clause (Imaginary Situation)	Main Clause (Imaginary Result)	Full Sentence
If I had more money	I would buy a new house	<i>If I had more money, I would buy a new house.</i>
If she spoke French	she would get the job	<i>If she spoke French, she would get the job.</i>
If we had a garden	we would grow vegetables	<i>If we had a garden, we would grow vegetables.</i>
If he was / were taller	he would play basketball	<i>If he were taller, he would play basketball.</i>
If they lived closer	they would visit us more often	<i>If they lived closer, they would visit us more often.</i>
If you had a pet	you would feel less lonely	<i>If you had a pet, you would feel less lonely.</i>

Using "Were" Instead of "Was"

In the **second conditional**, there is one special rule with the verb **to be**. In formal and correct English, we often use **were** for *all* subjects — not just *you, we, they*, but also *I, he, she, it*.

This can feel strange at first because in normal past simple sentences, we say *I was* or *she was*. But in the second conditional, **were** is traditionally preferred for all subjects.

- ✓ If I **were** you, I would ask for help.
- ✓ If she **were** a doctor, she would help more people.
- ✓ If he **were** taller, he would play basketball.

In everyday spoken English, many people also say *If I was...*, *If she was...* and this is very common. At A2 level, both **was** and **were** are acceptable, but it is a good idea to learn **were** as the preferred form.

- ✓ If I **were** rich, I would buy a big house. (Formal/correct)
- ✓ If I **was** rich, I would buy a big house. (Informal/spoken — also acceptable)

Contractions with "Would"

In spoken English and informal writing, we often shorten (contract) **would** to **'d**. This makes sentences sound more natural.

Full Form	Contraction	Example
I would	I'd	<i>If I had time, I'd go to the gym.</i>
You would	You'd	<i>If you lived here, you'd love it.</i>
He would	He'd	<i>If he knew, he'd tell you.</i>

Full Form	Contraction	Example
She would	She'd	<i>If she had a bike, she'd cycle to school.</i>
It would	It'd	<i>If it were cheaper, it'd be perfect.</i>
We would	We'd	<i>If we had a car, we'd drive there.</i>
They would	They'd	<i>If they studied more, they'd pass.</i>

Negative Forms in the Second Conditional

We can make either or both parts of the second conditional **negative**.

Negative If-Clause

Use **did not (didn't) + base verb** in the if-clause:

- *If I **didn't** have a job, I would be bored.*
- *If she **didn't** live so far away, we would see her more.*

Negative Main Clause

Use **would not (wouldn't) + base verb** in the main clause:

- *If I had more money, I **wouldn't** worry so much.*
- *If he had a car, he **wouldn't** take the bus.*

Second Conditional vs. First Conditional

It is very important to understand the difference between the **first conditional** and the **second conditional**.

	First Conditional	Second Conditional
Situation	Real or likely in the future	Imaginary or unlikely
If-clause	If + present simple	If + past simple
Main clause	will + base verb	would + base verb
Example	<i>If it rains, I will take an umbrella.</i>	<i>If I lived by the sea, I would swim every day.</i>

Key idea: The **first conditional** is about real possibilities. The **second conditional** is about imaginary or very unlikely situations.

Common Mistakes

Here are some common mistakes students make with the **second conditional**. Study them carefully!

✗ *If I would have more money, I would travel.*

✓ **Do not use "would" in the if-clause.** *If I had more money, I would travel.*

✗ *If I had more money, I will travel.*

✓ **Use "would", not "will", in the main clause of the second conditional.** *If I had more money, I would travel.*

✗ *If she knows the answer, she would tell us.*

✓ **Use past simple (knew) in the if-clause, not present simple.** *If she knew the answer, she would tell us.*

✗ *If I were rich, I would to buy a big house.*

✓ **Use the base verb without "to" after "would".** *If I were rich, I would buy a big house.*

✗ *If we lived closer we would visit you more.*

✓ **Use a comma after the if-clause when it comes first.** *If we lived closer, we would visit you more.*

✗ *If I had a car, I would drove to work.*

✓ **Use the base verb (not past simple) after "would".** *If I had a car, I would drive to work.*

Second Conditional: Quick Summary

Here are the key things to remember about the **second conditional**:

- Use the **second conditional** for **imaginary or unlikely situations** in the present or future.
- The **if-clause** uses the **past simple** — but it does not refer to the past. It just shows the situation is not real.
- The **main clause** uses **would + base verb**.
- **Never** use *would* in the if-clause.
- Use a **comma** after the if-clause when it comes first in the sentence.
- With the verb *to be*, use **were** for all subjects in formal English (*If I were...*, *If she were...*).
- You can shorten *would* to **'d** in everyday speech: *I'd*, *she'd*, *they'd*.

Part	Structure	Example
If-clause	If + subject + past simple	<i>If I had more money...</i>
Main clause	Subject + would + base verb	<i>...I would travel the world.</i>
Full sentence	If + past simple, would + base verb	<i>If I had more money, I would travel the world.</i>

Now practise the **second conditional** in the exercises below.

Second Conditional – Practice Test

A2 | 30 Questions: Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-Gap & Fill-in-the-Blank

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 If I had a car, I ____ to work every day.

- A** will drive
- B** would drive
- C** drove
- D** drive

2 If she ____ more money, she would travel the world.

- A** has
- B** will have
- C** had
- D** have

3 Which sentence is a correct second conditional?

- A** If it rains, I will stay home.
- B** If it rained, I would stay home.
- C** If it rained, I will stay home.
- D** If it rains, I would stay home.

4 If I were you, I ____ a doctor.

- A** will see
- B** see
- C** would see
- D** saw

5 I would buy a new phone if I ____ enough money.

- A** have
- B** had
- C** will have
- D** has

6 If they lived closer, we ____ them more often.

- A** visit
- B** visited
- C** will visit
- D** would visit

7 What does the second conditional talk about?

- A** Real plans for the future
- B** Things that happened in the past
- C** Imaginary or unlikely situations now or in the future
- D** Habits in the present

8 If he ____ the answer, he would tell you.

- A** knows
- B** known
- C** knew
- D** will know

9 She ____ happier if she had a better job.

- A** will be
- B** is
- C** was
- D** would be

10 If I ____ a famous singer, I would perform in big concerts.

- A** am
- B** will be
- C** were
- D** be

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

11 If I ____ a car, I would drive to the beach every weekend.

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

12 If she studied harder, she ____ better grades.

- A** would get
- B** will get
- C** gets

13 If I ____ you, I would apologize to her.

- A** were
- B** was
- C** am

14 He would buy a new phone if he ____ enough money.

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

15 If we lived near the park, we ____ there every morning.

- A** would walk
- B** will walk
- C** walked

16 If they ____ English well, they would get the job.

- A** spoke
- B** speak
- C** would speak

17 I ____ travel to Japan if I had more free time.

- A** would
- B** will
- C** do

18 If my sister ____ closer, I would visit her more often.

- A** lived
- B** lives
- C** would live

19 What would you do if you ____ a lot of money?

- A** won
- B** win
- C** would win

20 If it ____ sunny tomorrow, we would go to the beach.

- A** were
- B** is
- C** will be

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

21 If I _____ more free time, I would learn to play the guitar.

22 If she lived near the beach, she _____ every day.

23 If they _____ the lottery, they would buy a big house.

24 I would travel the world if I _____ rich.

25 If he _____ English better, he would get a good job.

26 What _____ you do if you found a wallet on the street?

27 If we had a car, we _____ to take the bus.

28 If I _____ fly, I would visit every country in the world.

29 She would be happier if she _____ a dog.

30 If it _____ so much here, I would go outside more often.

Answer Key & Explanations

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Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **B** Correct Answer: would drive  Explanation: In the second conditional, we use would + base verb in the result part. If I had a car, I would drive to work.
2. **C** Correct Answer: had  Explanation: In the second conditional, we use the past simple in the if clause. If she had more money... means it is not real now.
3. **B** Correct Answer: If it rained, I would stay home.  Explanation: The second conditional uses past simple in the if clause and would + verb in the result clause. If it rained, I would stay home.
4. **C** Correct Answer: would see  Explanation: If I were you... is a common second conditional phrase. The result clause uses would + base verb. I would see a doctor.
5. **B** Correct Answer: had  Explanation: In the second conditional, the if clause uses the past simple. If I had enough money means I do not have enough money now.
6. **D** Correct Answer: would visit  Explanation: After the if clause with past simple, the result clause uses would + base verb. We would visit them more often.
7. **C** Correct Answer: Imaginary or unlikely situations now or in the future  Explanation: The second conditional is used for imaginary or unreal situations. If I were rich, I would buy a house. — this is not real now.
8. **C** Correct Answer: knew  Explanation: The if clause in the second conditional uses the past simple. If he knew the answer means he does not know it now.
9. **D** Correct Answer: would be  Explanation: In the second conditional, the result clause uses would + base verb. She would be happier describes an imaginary result.
10. **C** Correct Answer: were  Explanation: In the second conditional, we often use were for all subjects (I, he, she, it) in the if clause. If I were a famous singer... is an imaginary situation.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** Correct Answer: had  Explanation: In the second conditional, we use the past simple in the if-clause. We say if I had, not if I have or if I would have.
12. **A** Correct Answer: would get  Explanation: In the second conditional, the main clause uses would + base verb. We say she would get, not she will get or she gets.

13. **A** Correct Answer: were ✓ Explanation: In the second conditional, we often use were for all subjects in the if-clause, especially in the phrase If I were you. This is a common fixed expression.
14. **A** Correct Answer: had ✓ Explanation: In the second conditional, the if-clause uses the past simple. We say if he had, not if he has or if he would have.
15. **A** Correct Answer: would walk ✓ Explanation: The main clause in the second conditional uses would + base verb. We say we would walk, not we will walk or we walked.
16. **A** Correct Answer: spoke ✓ Explanation: In the second conditional, the if-clause needs the past simple. We say if they spoke, not if they speak or if they would speak.
17. **A** Correct Answer: would ✓ Explanation: The main clause of a second conditional sentence uses would + base verb. We say I would travel, not I will travel or I do travel.
18. **A** Correct Answer: lived ✓ Explanation: In the second conditional, the if-clause uses the past simple. We say if she lived, not if she lives or if she would live.
19. **A** Correct Answer: won ✓ Explanation: In the second conditional, the if-clause uses the past simple. We say if you won, not if you win or if you would win.
20. **A** Correct Answer: were ✓ Explanation: In the second conditional, we use were (or was) in the if-clause, not is or will be. We say if it were sunny to talk about an imaginary situation.

Part 3: Fill in the Blank

21. **had** Correct Answer: had ✓ Explanation: In the Second Conditional, we use past simple in the if-clause. The verb have becomes had. If I had more time...
22. **would swim** Correct Answer: would swim ✓ Explanation: In the Second Conditional, the main clause uses would + base verb. She would swim describes an imaginary result.
23. **won** Correct Answer: won ✓ Explanation: The if-clause in the Second Conditional uses the past simple. Win becomes won in the past simple. If they won the lottery...
24. **were|was** Correct Answer: were / was ✓ Explanation: In the Second Conditional, both were and was are accepted after I. If I were rich... is the classic form, but was is also common in everyday speech.
25. **spoke** Correct Answer: spoke ✓ Explanation: The if-clause uses the past simple. The verb speak becomes spoke. This describes an imaginary situation. If he spoke English better...
26. **would** Correct Answer: would ✓ Explanation: In the Second Conditional, the main clause uses would + base verb. Questions use What would you do... to ask about imaginary situations.

27. **would not have|wouldn't have** Correct Answer: would not have / wouldn't have ✓ Explanation: The negative form in the main clause is would not + base verb or the contraction wouldn't. We wouldn't have to take the bus.
28. **could** Correct Answer: could ✓ Explanation: Could is the past simple form of can and is used in the if-clause of the Second Conditional to describe an imaginary ability. If I could fly...
29. **had** Correct Answer: had ✓ Explanation: The if-clause uses the past simple. Have becomes had. This sentence describes an imaginary situation that is not real now. If she had a dog...
30. **did not rain|didn't rain** Correct Answer: did not rain / didn't rain ✓ Explanation: The negative past simple in the if-clause is formed with did not + base verb or the contraction didn't. If it didn't rain... describes an imaginary condition.

Score Guide

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|----------------------|--|
| 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. |