CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Conditional sentences have two parts: the if-clause and the main clause. In the sentence *If it rains I shall stay at home* . *'If it rains'* is the if-clause, and *'I shall stay at home'* is the main clause. There are three kinds of conditional sentences. Each kind contains a different pair of tenses. With each type certain variations are possible but students who are studying the conditional for the first time should ignore these and concentrate on the basic forms.

I. **IF:**

1. Conditional sentences type 1: probable

Possible variations of the basic form

1.1. Variations of the main clause: Instead of if + present + future, we may have:

(a) if + present + may/might (possibility)

If the fog gets thicker the plane may/might be diverted. (Perhaps the plane will be diverted.)

(b) if + present + may (permission) or can (permission or ability)

If your documents are in order you may/can leave at once. (permission)

If it stops snowing we can go out. (permission or ability)

(c) if + present + must, should or any expression of command, request or advice

If you want to lose weight you must/should eat less bread.

If you want to lose weight you had better eat less bread.

If you want to lose weight eat less bread.

If you see Tom tomorrow could you ask him to ring me?

(d) if + present + another present tense: if + two present tenses is used to express automatic or habitual results:

If you heat ice it turns to water, (will turn is also possible.) If there is a shortage of any product prices of that product go up.

(e) When **if** is used to mean *as/since*, a variety of tenses can be used in the main clause:

Ann hates London. ~ If she hates it why does she live there?/she ought to move out. (If so could replace If she hates it here.) This is not, of course, a true conditional clause.

1.2. Variations of the if-clause: Instead of if + present tense, we can have:

(a) if + present continuous, to indicate a present action or a future arrangement

If you are waiting for a bus (present action) you'd better join the queue.

If you are looking for Peter (present action) you'll find him upstairs.

If you are staying for another night (future arrangement) I'll ask the manager to give you a better room.

(b) if + present perfect

If you have finished dinner I'll ask the waiter for the bill.

If he has written the letter I'll post it.

If they haven't seen the museum we 'd better go there today.

2. Conditional sentences type 2

The verb in the if-clause is in the past tense; the verb in the main clause is in the conditional tense:

If I had a map I would lend it to you. (But I haven't a map. The meaning here is present.)

If someone tried to blackmail me I would tell the police. (But I don't expect that anyone will try to blackmail me. The meaning here is future.)

There is no difference in time between the first and second types of conditional sentence. Type 2, like type 1, refers to the present or future, and the past tense in the if-clause is not a true past but a subjunctive, which indicates unreality (as in the first example above) or improbability (as in the second example above).

Type 2 is used:

* When the supposition is contrary to known facts:

If I lived near my office I'd be in time for work. (But I don't live near my office.)

If I were you I'd plant some trees round the house. (But I am not you.)

When we don't expect the action in the if-clause to take place:

If a burglar came into my room at night I'd scream. (But I don't expect a burglar to come in.)

If I dyed my hair blue everyone would laugh at me. (But I don't intend to dye it.)

Some if-clauses can have either of the above meanings:

If he left his bicycle outside someone would steal it. 'If he left his bicycle' could imply 'but he doesn't' (present meaning, as in 1 above) or 'but he doesn't intend to' (future meaning, as in 2). But the correct

meaning is usually clear from the text. Ambiguity of this kind can be avoided by using ***were/was + infinitive*** instead of the past tense in type 2.

if he/she/it were can be used instead of ***if he/she/it was***, and is considered the more correct form:

If he were to resign ... = If he resigned . . .

If I were to succeed . . . = If I succeeded . . .

This construction with were is chiefly found in fairly formal sentences. ***if he/she/it was + infinitive*** is possible in colloquial English, but the past tense, as shown above, is much more usual.

* Sometimes, rather confusingly, type 2 can be used as an alternative to type 1 for perfectly possible plans and suggestions:

Will Mary be in time if she gets the ten o'clock bus? ~ No, but she'd be in time if she got the nine-thirty bus or *No, but she'll be in time if she gets the nine-thirty bus.*

We'll never save £100! ~ If we each saved £10 a week we'd do it in ten weeks or *If we each save £10 a week we'll do it in ten weeks.*

A suggestion in type 2 is a little more polite than a suggestion in type 1, just as would you is a more polite request form than will you. But the student needn't trouble too much over this use of type 2.

Possible variations of the basic form:

2.1. Variations of the main clause:

(a) might or could may be used instead of would:

If you tried again you would succeed. (certain result)

If you tried again you might succeed. (possible result)

If I knew her number I could ring her up. (ability)

If he had a permit he could get a job. (ability or permission)

(b) The continuous 'conditional form may be used instead of the simple conditional form:

Peter is on holiday; he is touring Italy. ~ If I were on holiday I would/might be touring Italy too.

(c) if + past tense can be followed by another past tense when we wish to express automatic or habitual reactions in the past. Note that the past tenses here have a past meaning:

If anyone interrupted him he got angry, (whenever anyone interrupted him)

If there was a scarcity of anything prices of that thing went up.

2.2. Variations of the if-clause: Instead of if + simple past we can have:

(a) if + past continuous

We 're going by air and I hate flying. If we were going by boat I'd feel much happier.

If my car was working I would/could drive you to the station.

(b) if + past perfect

If he had taken my advice he would be a rich man now. (This is a mixture of types 2 and 3.)

3. Conditional sentences type 3

The verb in the if-clause is in the past perfect tense; the verb in the main clause is in the perfect conditional. The time is past and the condition cannot be fulfilled because the action in the if-clause didn't happen.

If I had known that you were coming I would have met you at the airport. (But I didn't know, so I didn't come.)

If he had tried to leave the country he would have been stopped at the frontier. (But he didn't try.)

Possible variations of the basic form

3.1. *could* or *might* may be used instead of *would*:

If we had found him earlier we could have saved his life. (ability)

If we had found him earlier we might have saved his life. (possibility)

If our documents had been in order we could have left at once. (ability or permission)

3.2. The continuous form of the perfect conditional may be used:

At the time of the accident I was sitting in the back of the car, because Tom's little boy was sitting beside him in front. *If Tom's boy had not been there I would have been sitting in front.*

3.3. We can use the past perfect continuous in the if-clause:

I was wearing a seat belt. *If I hadn't been wearing one I'd have been seriously injured.*

3.4. A combination of types 2 and 3 is possible:

The plane I intended to catch crashed and everyone was killed. *If I had caught that plane I would be dead now or / would have been killed.*

If I had worked harder at school I would be sitting in a comfortable office now; I wouldn't be sweeping the streets. (But I didn't work hard at school and now I am sweeping the streets.)

II. INVERTED CONDITIONAL SENTENCES WITHOUT IF:
1. TYPE 1:

If + S + V(present), S + V(present)

S + will + bare inf.

INVERSION → **Should** + S (+ not) + bare inf., S + V(present)

S + will + bare inf.

TYPE 2:

If + S + V(past subjunctive), S + would + bare inf.

INVERSION → **Were** + S (+ not) …, S + would + bare inf.

Were + S (+ not) + to inf.,

TYPE 3:

If + S + had + PP, S + would have + PP

INVERSION → **Had** + S (+ not) + PP, S + would have + PP

Ex: If you leave now, you'll be able to catch the 5 o'clock train.

If you throw a stone into water, it sinks (*or* it will sink).

If I taught this class, I wouldn't give tests.

If anybody had asked me, I could have told them what happened.

III. OTHER TYPES OF CONDITIONAL SENTENCES:

1. even if = even though *: thậm chí nếu, mặc dù*

Compare:

You must go tomorrow if you are ready.

You must go tomorrow even if you aren't ready.

2. whether… or *: cho dù*

You must go tomorrow whether you are ready or not.

3. unless = if… not *: nếu … không*

Unless you start at once you'll be late. = If you don't start at once you'll be late.

Unless you had a permit you couldn't get a job. = If you hadn't a permit you couldn't get a job.

4. but for = if it were not for/ if it hadn't been for *: nếu không nhờ có*

My father pays my fees. But for that I wouldn't be here.

The car broke down. But for that we would have been in time.

5. otherwise = if it doesn't happen/ didn't happen/ hadn't happened *: nếu không thì*

We must be back before midnight; otherwise we'll be locked out. = If we are not back by midnight we'll be locked out.

Her father pays her fees; otherwise she wouldn't be here. = If her father didn't pay her fees she wouldn't be here.

I used my calculator; otherwise I'd have taken longer. = If I hadn't used my calculator, I'd have taken longer.

6. or (else) = otherwise

We must be early; otherwise we won't get a seat. = We must be early or (else) we won't get a seat.

7. provided (that) = as/ so long as *: miễn là*

You can camp here provided you leave no mess.

8. suppose/ supposing…? = what if…? *: giả sử…*

Suppose the plane is late? = What if/ What will happen if the plane is late?

Supposing no one had been there? = What if no one had been there?

suppose/ supposing/ imagine (that)

Supposing that you fell in love with your boss, what would you do?

9. in case + S + Vpresent/ past/ should + bare inf. : *trong trường hợp*

Some cyclists carry repair outfits in case they have a puncture. = Some cyclists carry repair outfits because they may have/ because it is possible they will have a puncture.

I always slept by the phone in case he rang during the night. = I always slept by the phone because (I knew) he might ring during the night.

Note: *in case of + noun = if there is a/ an + noun*

In case of accident phone 999. = If there is an accident phone 999.

10. on condition that (với điều kiện là), **in the event of** *(trong trường hợp)*

I'll give you the day off on condition that you work on Saturday morning.

EXERCISES:

I. Underline the corrected form.

1. Eat these sandwiches up; (in case/ otherwise/ providing) they will be wasted.

2. The man was released (in/ on/ with) condition that he reported.

3. I don't mind you are having a party (as long as/ in case/ with) I'm invited.

4. (As long as/ In case/ Without) your help, I would never succeed.

5. (But for/ In the event of/ Provided that) a break down, you should receive immediate assistance.

6. You can give a file any name (condition/ provided/ supposing) that the name hasn't already been used.

7. I can come back later (if/ otherwise/ in case) necessary.

8. I'll take an umbrella with me now (if / in case/ unless) it rains later on.

9. You shouldn't make promises (then/ unless /if) you mean to keep them.

10. You shouldn't ride a bike (unless/ without/ otherwise) a helmet.

11. A picnic would be nice (as long as/ if/ unless) it were warm enough.

12. I'm playing tennis tomorrow (unless/ providing/ in case) it's not raining.

13. (Unless/ If/ Providing) he sells more he won't get much commission.

14. (In case/ Condition/ If) I lend you £ 10 when will you repay me?

15. (But for/ As long as/ If) the fog we would have reached our destination ages ago.

II. Supply the correct forms of the verbs in brackets.

1. What a terrible thing to happen! Just think, if we (not miss)……………………….…………. the flight, we (kill) …………………………….…………. in the crash.

2. I'm not tired. If I (be) …………………….………. tired, I (go) …………………….………. home now.

3. I wasn't tired last night. If I (be) …………………. tired, I (go) ………………………. home earlier.

4. Why don't we emigrate? If we (live) ………………………….…………. in Australia, at least the weather (be) ………………………….………. better.

5. Thanks to Dr Jones, I'm still alive! If it (not be) ………………….…………. for her, I (be) ………………………. dead for certain.

6. Don't be afraid! If you (touch) ……………….……...……. the dog, it (not bite) ……………………….

7. In those days, if you (have) …………………….………. a job, you (be) ………………………. lucky.

8. Ken got to the station in time to catch his train. If he (miss) …………………….…………. it, he (be) …………………….………. late for the interview.

9. We'll have to move upstairs if the river (rise)… …………………… any higher.

10. If I (realize) ……………………………. what a bad driver you were I wouldn't have come.

11. What (happen)……… ……………………… if I press this button?

12. If he (work) ……………………. hard today can he have a holiday tomorrow?

13. I should have voted for her if I (have)…… ………………… a vote then.

14. If you (drive)…………..………… your car into the river you (be) …………………………… able to get out.

15. Ice (turn) ……………………. to water if you heat it.

16. I (visit) ……………………. you sooner had someone told me you were in hospital.

17. Should I need more help, I (call) …………………… my neighbor.

18. If you (listen) ………………. to my advice in the first place, you (not be) ……………………. in this mess right now.

19. I (not bring) ……………………. William with me if I had known you and he didn't get along with each other.

20. If you (not stay) …………………… up late last night, you (not be) …………………… tired now.

III. Are the underlined parts of the sentences correct? Correct the ones that are wrong.

1. If I have my wish, I'd be a film star.

2. If the disease will be untreated, it can lead to brain damage.

3. If a UFO landed in the center of London, there would be mass panic.

4. Have we delayed any longer, we would have been too late.

5. If you could go to the concert, you'd have enjoyed it, I'm sure.

6. If you'll tell me where the vacuum cleaner is, I'll clean the house.

7. If they would have bought a group ticket, it would have been less expensive.

8. The alarm rings if anyone will approach the house.

9. If anything shall go wrong, give me a ring.

10. Just keep quiet about it. Mention it to anyone or you'll regret it.

11. If we drove through the town center, <u>it will take longer</u>.
12. <u>If I am the President of the United States,</u> I would order its nuclear weapons to be destroyed.
13. <u>If he won't resign,</u> the Prime Minister should sack him.
14. <u>Hadn't I examined the photograph myself,</u> I would have thought it was a fake.
15. It would be a serious setback, <u>were the talks to fail</u>.

IV. Write a sentence of similar meaning using the word in brackets.

1. Be careful or you'll cut yourself with that knife. (Unless)

....

2. The exercises are very difficult so I can't finish in fifteen minutes. (If)

....

3. He wasn't able to answer the questions, so he failed the exam. (If)

....

4. Without a visa, she couldn't have come to that country. (If)

....

5. I didn't bring extra money with me because you didn't tell me we were going to dinner after the movie. (If)

....

6. The farmers didn't have enough rain, so they could not grow rice. (Had)

....

7. She got married at such an early age, so she isn't at university now. (If)

....

8. But for the view, this would not be a lovely room. (If)

....

9. The police are ready on the streets because the protest may get violent. (In case)

....

10. I might lose my job, but they'll have to pay me a month's wages. (Should)

....

11. Simon was ill, so he didn't go to the party. (If)

....

12. We've got a broken window because you and your friends were playing football in the back yard. (If)

....

13. If you don't leave the building immediately, I'll call security. (Or)

....

14. Imagine a situation where sea levels rise dramatically. (What)

....

15. I missed the end of the film so I don't know who the murderer was. (If)

....

10. Should I lose my job, they'll have to pay me a month's wages.

KEY:

I.

1. otherwise	9. unless
2. on	10. without
3. as long as	11. if
4. Without	12. providing
5. In the event of	13. Unless
6. provided	14. If
7. if	15. But for
8. in case	

II.

1. had not missed – would have been killed
2. were – would go
3. had been – would have gone
4. live – will be
5. had not been – would have been
6. touch – will not bite
7. had had – would have been

8. had missed – would have been
9. rises
10. had realized
11. will happen
12. works
13. had had
14. drive – will be
15. turns
16. would have visited
17. will call
18. had listened – would not be
19. would not have brought
20. had not stayed – would not be

III.
1. If I had my wish
2. If the disease is untreated
3. correct
4. Had we delayed any longer
5. If you had gone to the concert
6. If you tell me where the vacuum cleaner is
7. If they had bought a group ticket
8. if anyone approaches the house
9. If anything goes wrong
10. correct
11. it would take longer
12. If I were the President of the United States
13. If he doesn't resign
14. Had I not examined the photograph myself
15. correct

IV.
1. If you are not careful, you'll cut yourself with that knife.
2. If the exercises weren't very difficult I could finish in fifteen minutes.
3. If he had been able to answer the questions, he wouldn't have failed the exam.
4. If she had not had a visa, she couldn't have come to that country.
5. I would have brought extra money with me if you had told me we were going to dinner after the movie.
6. Had the farmers had enough rain, they could have grown rice.
7. If she hadn't got married at such an early age, she would be at university now.
8. If it were not for the view, this would not be a lovely room.
9. The police are ready on the streets in case the protest gets violent.
11. If Simon had not been ill, he would have gone to the party.
12. We would not have a broken window if you and your friends hadn't been playing football in the back yard.
13. Leave the building immediately or I'll call security.
14. What would you do if sea levels rose dramatically?
15. If I had not missed the end of the film I would know who the murderer was.