



Conditionals: Zero to Second

Conditional sentences describe **cause and effect**, or **hypothetical situations**. They typically have **two parts**:

- **If-clause** (condition)
 - **Main clause** (result)
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1. Zero Conditional



Structure:

If + Present Simple, Present Simple



Use:

- Facts
- Scientific truths
- Habits
- General truths



Meaning:

The condition and result are **always true** — not just possible.



Examples:

- If you **heat** ice, it **melts**.
- If people **don't drink** water, they **die**.
- If I **wake up** early, I **go** for a run.



You can use "**when**" instead of "if" in zero conditionals.

2. First Conditional



Structure:

If + Present Simple, will + base verb



Variations:

- can, may, might instead of *will*

- imperatives in the result clause

Use:

- Real, possible situations in the **future**
- Predictions, warnings, offers

Meaning:

The condition is **possible**, and the result is **likely** in the future.

Examples:

- If it **rains**, I **will stay** home.
- If she **studies**, she **might pass** the exam.
- If you **don't leave**, I **will call** the police.

 *If I win the lottery, I'll buy a house.*

3. Second Conditional

Structure:

If + Past Simple, would/could/might + base verb

Variations:

- “Were” is used for **all subjects** (formal): *If I were you...*
- Often used for giving advice or imagining alternatives.

Use:


- **Unreal, unlikely, or imaginary** situations (present or future)
- Dreams, hypothetical events, advice

Meaning:

The condition is **not true** or **unlikely**, and the result is imaginary.

Examples:

- If I **were** rich, I **would travel** the world.
- If she **had** more time, she **could help** us.
- If we **lived** in Spain, we **might speak** better Spanish.

 *If I didn't have to work, I'd be at the beach right now.*

Comparison Table

Type	Structure	Use	Example
Zero Conditional	If + present, present	General truth	If you mix red and blue, you get purple.
First Conditional	If + present, will/can/might + base	Real future possibility	If I see her, I'll say hi.
Second Conditional	If + past, would/could + base	Unreal, imaginary (present/future)	If I knew, I'd tell you.

Notes on Conditional Usage

- **Comma rule:** Use a comma when the **if-clause comes first**
→ *If it rains, we'll stay inside.*
No comma when it comes second: *We'll stay inside if it rains.*
- **Were vs Was:**
In formal English, use **"were"** with all subjects in 2nd conditionals
→ *If I were you...* (not *was*)
- **Modal variations:**
You can replace *will/would* with *can/could/might/should* depending on context or certainty.