

GRAMMAR SUPPLEMENT

THE SECOND CONDITIONAL

1.1 FORM

The second conditional in English is formed with "if + past simple" in the condition clause and "would + base verb" in the result clause, expressing a hypothetical future or present result of a hypothetical condition.

CONDITION CLAUSE (IF-CLAUSE)	RESULT/MAIN CLAUSE
If I studied,	I would get the best grade on the test.
If it rained more,	streets would be under water.
If there were still dinosaurs,	the world would look radically different.

The order of the two clauses is not grammatically important. If the condition clause is first, a comma is placed between the two clauses.

RESULT/MAIN CLAUSE	CONDITION CLAUSE (IF-CLAUSE)
I would get the best grade on the test.	if I studied.
streets would be under water.	if it rained more.
the world would look radically different.	if there were still dinosaurs.

You can also use other modals (could and might) apart from *would*. In this case, you are giving a different meaning to the sentence, but the form is the same. As in the case of *would*, the order of the two clauses is not important.

RESULT/MAIN CLAUSE	CONDITION CLAUSE (IF-CLAUSE)
I could improve my grades	If I studied more.
Lorenzo might tell you	If you asked him.
They could have cleaner energy	If they installed solar panels.
You might find the answer	If you read more books on the subject.

In the case of *to be*, we can use *were* for all forms. The use of *was* in the first- and third-person singular is an acceptable option.

FIRST- AND THIRD- PERSON SINGULAR	OTHER PERSONS
If I were/was stronger...	If we were best friends...
If she were/was my boss...	If you were the star of the movie...
If it were/was warmer...	If they were older...

1.2 USE

Hypothetical or unreal situations: The primary use is to discuss things that are unlikely or impossible to happen now or in the future.

Hypothetical or unreal situations
If aliens landed behind my house, my mom would probably offer them coffee. I would train for the Olympics, if I were a fast runner It would be a miracle if it snowed in the Caribbean.
Giving advice
If I were you, I'd take an umbrella because it looks like it's going to rain.

1.3 Practice Exercise A

Complete the space with the correct form of the verb (past simple or would) in parentheses.

1. If I _____ (win) the lottery, I _____ (travel) the world.
2. You _____ (be) able to see the information if you _____ (have) the app.
3. If no one _____ (pick up) the trash, everything _____ (be) very dirty.
4. If you _____ (NOT feed) your pet, it _____ (die).
5. I _____ (NOT tell) Susan the news, if she _____ (be) in a bad mood.
6. If you _____ (visit) ancient Rome, you _____ (get) scared by what you saw.
7. I _____ (order) some pizza if I _____ (NOT be) allergic to all the ingredients.
8. If Milton _____ (have) a car, he _____ (take) us there.
9. He _____ (have) a different accent, if he _____ (be) from Liverpool.
10. If you _____ (NOT be) careful with those chemicals, you _____ (cause) an explosion.

1.4 Practice Exercise B

Match the if-clause to the main clause.

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. If the picture fell off the wall, | a) they'd dominate the Olympics. |
| 2. If the coffee were better, | b) I'd get everywhere very fast. |
| 3. If Neanderthals were around today, | c) I'd make it for you. |
| 4. If the speech were even longer, | d) I'd order it. |
| 5. If no one liked Math, | e) people would get up and leave. |
| 6. If I could fly like a bird, | f) I'd hang it up again. |
| 7. If you asked me to make dinner, | g) I'd love to be in a movie. |
| 8. If I had acting skills, | h) there wouldn't be any engineers. |

1.5 Practice Exercise C

Match the main clause to the if-clause (or time clause).

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|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. The bomb would explode | a) if you wore that crazy hat. |
| 2. Your project would be accepted | b) if we didn't have cows. |
| 3. The world would be very different | c) if it were designed better. |
| 4. You'd scream | d) if they paid me less. |
| 5. You'd laugh | e) if a car drove over your foot. |
| 6. You'd turn into a meme | f) if weren't extremely careful. |
| 7. I'd quit my job | g) if you saw his stand up routine. |
| 8. Hamburgers wouldn't exist | h) if humans didn't exist |

1.6 Practice Exercise D

Complete the spaces with 2 words: one from the verb category and one from the noun category.

NOUNS	VERBS
effect	had
ghost	were
students	would
planet	be
answer	believe
essay	be
climate	tell
co-worker	wrote

1. If the _____ here were better, our beaches would _____ lots of tourists.
2. We'd _____ inconceivably different if we lived on a different _____.
3. If Paul _____ a more disciplined person, he'd be a very reliable _____.
4. I'd _____ you if I knew the _____.
5. I _____ feel awful if this had a bad _____ on you.
6. If the campus _____ more green areas, _____ would be happier.
7. Your _____ would be better if you _____ an outline first.
8. Nobody would _____ you if you said you saw a _____.

ANSWER KEY

1.4 Practice Exercise A

Complete the space with the correct form of the verb (past simple or would) in parentheses.

1. If I **won** the lottery, I **would travel** the world.
2. You **would be** able to see the information if you **had** the app.
3. If no one **picked up** the trash, everything **would be** very dirty.
4. If you **didn't feed** your pet, it **would die**.
5. I **would not tell** Susan the news, if she **would be** in a bad mood.
6. If you **visited** ancient Rome, you **would get** scared by what you saw.
7. I **would order** some pizza if I **were** allergic to all the ingredients.
8. If Milton **had** a car, he **would take** us there.
9. He **would have** a different accent, if he **were** from Liverpool.
10. If you **weren't** careful with those chemicals, you **would cause** an explosion.

1.4 Practice Exercise B

Match the if-clause to the main clause.

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. If the picture fell off the wall, (f) | a) they'd dominate the Olympics |
| 2. If the coffee were better, (d) | b) I'd get everywhere very fast. |
| 3. If Neanderthals were around today, (a) | c) I'd make it for you. |
| 4. If the speech were even longer, (e) | d) I'd order it. |
| 5. If no one liked Math, (h) | e) people would get up and leave. |
| 6. If I could fly like a bird, (b) | f) I'd hang it up again. |
| 7. If you asked me to make dinner, (c) | g) I'd love to be in a movie. |
| 8. If I had acting skills, (g) | h) there wouldn't be any engineers. |

1.7 Practice Exercise C

Match the main clause to the if-clause (or time clause).

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. The bomb would explode (f) | a) if you wore that crazy hat. |
| 2. Your project would be accepted (c) | b) if we didn't have cows. |
| 3. The world would be very different (h) | c) if it were designed better. |
| 4. You'd scream (e) | d) if they paid me less. |
| 5. You'd laugh (g) | e) if a car drove over your foot. |
| 6. You'd turn into a meme (a) | f) if weren't extremely careful. |

1. If the **climate** here were better, our beaches would **be** lots of tourists.
2. We'd **be** inconceivably different if we lived on a different **planet**.
3. If Paul **were** a more disciplined person, he'd be a very reliable **co-worker**.
4. I'd **tell** you if I knew the **answer**.
5. I **would** feel awful if this had a bad **effect** on you.
6. If the campus **had** more green areas, **students** would be happier.
7. Your **essay** would be better if you **wrote** an outline first.
8. Nobody would **believe** you if you said you saw a **ghost**.