

Grammar Notes

SECOND CONDITIONAL

A. Introduction to Conditionals

Conditionals are used to express a *hypothetical* situation. This is when you don't know if something will happen or not, so you make a guess about what the result might be. There are four conditional patterns in the English language, and they usually involve an "if" clause. This lesson will focus on the **second conditional**, also known as the **unreal conditional**.

B. The Second Conditional

Pattern: If + past, would + base verb

Use: The second conditional shows an **unlikely** or **impossible** outcome that wouldn't happen in most cases (unless a specific condition were somehow met).

Tip #1

The verb in the *if clause* is a **simple past** verb, and the verb in the *main clause* is **would + the base form** of the verb. A sentence can begin with either clause with no change in meaning. Remember that a sentence that begins with an *if clause* is followed by a comma.

- **If they had more money**, they would buy a car.
- **They would buy a car** if they had more money.

Examples

Sentences	Condition	Outcome	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If we won the lottery, we would travel around the world. • We would travel around the world if we won the lottery. 	winning the lottery	travelling around the world	Winning the lottery is rare, so this is very unlikely .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If I had wings, I would fly to Japan. • I would fly to Japan if I had wings. 	having wings	flying to Japan	I don't have wings, so this is impossible .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If Lisa lived near the beach, she would learn to surf. • Lisa would learn to surf if she lived near the beach. 	living near the beach	learning to surf	She doesn't live near the beach now, so this is unlikely .



Grammar Notes cont.

B. The Second Conditional cont.

Examples cont.			
Sentences	Condition	Outcome	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I were rich, I wouldn't work anymore.* I wouldn't work anymore if I were rich. 	being rich	not working	I don't have a lot of money right now, so this is unlikely .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If my grandparents were young again, they would do things differently. My grandparents would do things differently if they were young again. 	being young again	living life in a different way	They can't go back in time, so this is impossible .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the children had a pool, they would swim every day. The children would swim every day if they had a pool. 	having a pool	swimming every day	They don't have a pool now, so this is unlikely .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If she grew an extra head, she would be twice as smart. She would be twice as smart if she grew an extra head. 	growing another head	being twice as smart	She can't grow another head, so this is impossible .

*Tip #2

The *Be* verb in conditional sentences is always **were** (not *was*) for all subjects. Some people choose to ignore this rule, but it's best to follow it.

- If I **were** a dog, I would lie around in the sun all day.
- If Juan **were** an astronaut, he would fly to the moon.

Tip #3

Would can contract to **'d** with subjects that are pronouns. *Would not* can contract to **wouldn't** with any subject.

- If the clerk were taller, she**'d** be able to reach the top shelf.
- If my coworker inherited a lot of money, he probably **wouldn't** work here anymore.

Tip #4

Could + base verb can be used in place of a past verb or *would + base verb* to indicate ability or possibility.

- If I **could ski**, I would buy a season's pass at my local mountain.
- If I didn't have to babysit tonight, I **could go** to Marco's party.