

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
• 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 .
• 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 .
• 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
- 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 .
- 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 .
- 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 .
- 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.

Exercise 1

MULTIPLE-CHOICE

Circle the best answer.

Ex. I would buy a new car if I _____ more money.

- ☒ a) had
- b) have
- c) will have

1. If I were hungry, I _____ a sandwich.

- a) make
- b) will make
- c) would make

2. If he _____ his homework every day,
he would get better marks.

- a) did
- b) does
- c) will do

3. If our partners were here,
they _____ us what to do.

- a) told
- b) would tell
- c) tell

4. I would help her if she _____ me.

- a) will ask
- b) asked
- c) asks

5. If my brother found a \$20
bill on the street, he _____ it.

- a) will keep
- b) kept
- c) would keep

6. I _____ to your party on Saturday
if I didn't have to work.

- a) came
- b) would come
- c) will come

7. I would call them if I _____ their
telephone number.

- a) knew
- b) know
- c) will know

8. She wouldn't fall asleep in class
if she _____ so tired.

- a) wasn't
- b) was
- c) weren't

9. If my friend _____ so busy,
he would have time to hang out with me.

- a) weren't
- b) were
- c) was

10. If I didn't have to go out tonight,
I _____ relax at home.

- a) could
- b) didn't
- c) wouldn't

Exercise 2

FILL IN THE BLANKS

Complete the following sentences using the correct form of the verbs provided.

- Ex. Frank is always tired. If he went to bed earlier every night,
(go)
he would feel much better.
(feel)
1. It's Monday today, but if it _____ Saturday, I _____ to the beach.
(be) (go)
 2. I don't have any money now, but if I _____ some, I _____ it to you.
(have) (lend)
 3. I have to work tomorrow, but if I _____ free, I _____ shopping with you.
(be) (go)
 4. Amy can only speak one language, but if she _____ two languages,
(can speak)
she _____ for a job at the Multicultural Centre.
(apply)
 5. Sue doesn't know how to knit. If she _____ how to knit,
(know)
she _____ a sweater for you for your birthday.
(make)
 6. I don't own a pair of skis. If I _____ skis, I _____ skiing with you.
(have) (go)
 7. We are not going to buy that house, but if it _____ a little cheaper,
(be)
we _____ it.
(buy)
 8. He fails his exams because he gets so nervous. If he _____, he _____.
(relax) (pass)
 9. John has a lot of car accidents. If he _____ more carefully,
(drive)
he _____ fewer accidents.
(have)
 10. Robert smokes a lot. If he _____ smoking, his cough _____ better.
(quit) (get)