

Second Conditional

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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	traveling 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.

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 Center.
(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)

Exercise 3

MATCHING

Match the first part of the sentence on the left with the best ending on the right. Each choice can only be used once.

- | | | | | |
|-------|-----|----------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|
| _ e | 1. | If I were rich, ... | a) | if I were bald. |
| _____ | 2. | If I had a dog, ... | b) | if the neighbors were very noisy. |
| _____ | 3. | I would go to the dentist... | c) | I would take it again. |
| _____ | 4. | I would buy a wig... | d) | if I were rude to the customers. |
| _____ | 5. | I would quit my job... | e) | I would buy a private island. |
| _____ | 6. | If I saw a bad car accident, ... | f) | if I had to work overtime every day. |
| _____ | 7. | I would move... | g) | I could move to Mexico. |
| _____ | 8. | If I spoke Spanish, ... | h) | I would name it Fido. |
| _____ | 9. | If I failed the course, ... | i) | I would call an ambulance. |
| _____ | 10. | My boss would fire me... | j) | if I had a bad toothache. |

Exercise 4

COMPLETE THE SENTENCES

Complete the following sentences using your own words.

Ex. If I only had one month to live, *I would travel around the world.* _____

1. If I had some free time, _____
2. I would move to a bigger apartment if _____
3. If I had a bike, _____
4. I would walk to school every day if _____
5. I would go to the doctor if _____
6. If I had a roommate, _____
7. If I knew his phone number, _____
8. If I were taller, _____

Exercise 5

COMPREHENSION

Read the conditional sentences below and answer the questions that follow each one.

Ex. If it weren't raining, I would go for a long walk.

Yes a) Is it raining?

No b) Am I going for a long walk?

1. If I knew her well, I would call her.

_____ a) Do I know her well?

_____ b) Am I going to call her?

2. He would apply for the job if he had a university degree.

_____ a) Does he have a university degree?

_____ b) Is he going to apply for the job?

_____ c) Does he want to apply for the job?

3. If I couldn't speak French, I wouldn't go to France for my month-long vacation.

_____ a) Can I speak French?

_____ b) Am I going to France for my vacation?

4. If I owned a car, I wouldn't take the bus to work.

_____ a) Do I own a car?

_____ b) Do I take the bus to work?

_____ c) Would I rather drive to work than take the bus?

5. If I had a lot of money, I would lend you some.

_____ a) Do I have a lot of money?

_____ b) Am I going to lend you some money?

6. I probably wouldn't sunburn so badly if I didn't have such fair skin.

_____ a) Do I have fair skin?

_____ b) Do I get bad sunburns?

7. If I were afraid to watch scary movies, I wouldn't go to that show.

_____ a) Am I afraid to watch scary movies?

_____ b) Am I going to go to that show?

8. I would go to your party if I didn't have a lot of homework tonight.

_____ a) Do I have a lot of homework tonight?

_____ b) Am I going to go to your party tonight?

_____ c) Do I want to go to your party?

9. If I had the chance to relive my high school days, I wouldn't.

_____ a) Will I get the chance to relive my high school days?

_____ b) Would I like to relive my high school days?

I would climb Mount Everest if my leg weren't broken.

_____ a) Will I climb Mount Everest?

_____ b) Is my leg broken?

_____ c) Do I want to climb Mount Everest?

Exercise 6

SURVEY

Work in small groups. Complete the chart below by asking your classmates the following questions using the second conditional.

#	Question	Classmate #1	Classmate #2	Classmate #3
1	If you won a million dollars, what would you do with it?			
2	If you could have three wishes, what would you wish for?			
3	If you could buy a new car, what kind would you buy?			
4	If you could spend a day with any famous person in the world, who would you choose?			
5	If you had enough money to travel to any place in the world, where would you go first?			
6	If you could have any job you wanted, what would it be?			
7	If you could live anywhere in the world, where would you choose to live?			
8	If you were the leader of your country, what would you try to do first?			

Exercise 7

WHAT'S YOUR ADVICE?

Read the following situations and write some advice using the second conditional.

Ex. Lee eats a lot of junk food and sweets, but he complains that he is fat.

If he ate healthier, he wouldn't have a problem with his weight.

1. Andrea doesn't pay attention in class. Then she doesn't understand the homework.

2. Sayid is always late because he doesn't wear a watch.

3. Maria is not a good tennis player because she never practices.

4. Min's father always burns dinner because he doesn't set the timer on the oven.

5. Johnny's mom often gets mad at him because he doesn't pick up his toys.

6. Toshi gets a lot of speeding tickets because he drives too fast.

7. Kwan coughs a lot because he smokes.

8. Claire doesn't feel good because she doesn't exercise.

9. Ana can never take a vacation because she spends all her money on new clothes.

10. Kevin doesn't get good grades because he doesn't study much.

Exercise 9

GROUP DISCUSSION

Discuss the following questions in small groups.

1. What would you do if you saw someone having a heart attack?
2. What would you do if a fire broke out in your house or apartment?
3. How would you feel if you went to a party and you were the only one who didn't bring a present?
4. What would you do if you were lying in bed late at night and you heard someone trying to break into your house? How would you feel?
5. What would you do if your neighbors had noisy parties every weekend?
6. How would you feel if your landlord told you that you had to move out of your apartment in one week? What would you do?
7. How would you feel if your teacher told you that you were going to have a big exam tomorrow? What would you do?
8. What would you do if the person you loved were moving to another country?
9. How would you feel if your doctor told you that you only had two more months to live? What would you do?
10. What would you do if you went hiking up a mountain and got lost? What would you do if you saw a bear?

Now think of five more questions to ask your group.
Use the second conditional in each question.

11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

Exercise 10

HOPE & WISH

A. Review

Compare the verbs *hope* and *wish* in the chart below.

	Hope	Wish
Patterns	hope + simple present	wish + simple past wish + would/could + base verb
Uses	likely, possible situations	unlikely or impossible situations
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I hope I do well this semester. • I hope you feel better soon. • The children hope it snows. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I wish I had more time to finish this project, but it's due now. • I wish I could fly. • She wishes she were* rich.

***Note**

As with second conditional sentences, the *Be* verb after *wish* becomes *were*, not *was*, for all subjects.

B. Practice

Read the examples using *hope* and *wish* and the first and second conditional. Then finish the sentences using the first or second conditional.

Ex. I hope it is sunny tomorrow. If *it is sunny*, *I will go to the beach*.

Ex. I wish I were ten years younger. If *I were ten years younger*, *I would train for a marathon*.

1. I hope I pass the exam. If _____



Exercise 10 cont.

2. I hope John comes to the party. If _____

3. I wish I had a dog. If _____

4. I wish I could speak Spanish fluently. If _____

5. I wish my sister lived in a bigger apartment. If _____

6. I wish I weren't so shy. If _____

7. I hope she wins the tennis match tomorrow. If _____

8. I wish I could afford to travel. If _____

9. He hopes the plane arrives on time. If _____

10. They wish they knew her address. If _____

11. I hope you get the job. If _____

12. I wish my boyfriend didn't have to work tonight. If _____

Exercise 11

QUIZ

Complete this review of the first conditional, second conditional, hope, and wish. Circle the best answer.

- If he had a new car, he _____ us to school.
 - would drive
 - will drive
 - drove
- You will live longer if you _____ smoking.
 - will stop
 - stop
 - stopped
- I'm sick of all this rain. I wish it _____ sunny.
 - was
 - is
 - were
- I would clean the whole house if I _____ more time.
 - would have
 - will have
 - had
- If she _____ in June, she will start work in July.
 - would graduate
 - will graduate
 - graduates
- We hope you _____ well soon.
 - got
 - get
 - would get
- If I _____ into a car accident, I would call 911.
 - will get
 - would get
 - got
- He will _____ more milk if he remembers.
 - buy
 - buys
 - bought
- I wish I _____ the name of that song.
 - will remember
 - could remember
 - remember
- If my boss wanted me to redo this report, I _____ .
 - won't
 - would
 - will
- If our teacher gives us more homework, I _____ time to go out tonight.
 - won't have
 - wouldn't have
 - not have
- They wouldn't be here now if it _____ for all your hard work.
 - wasn't
 - weren't
 - isn't

Answer Key

LESSON DESCRIPTION:

Students learn and practice the second conditional through writing and speaking activities. They also learn the difference between *hope* and *wish* and complete a mixed review of the first and second conditional.

LEVEL: Int

TIME: 2–3 hours

TAGS: conditional, second conditional, unreal conditional, mood, hypothetical, subjunctive, would, could, past, verbs, first conditional, if, hope, wish, sentence patterns, grammar

Exercise 1

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. c | 3. b | 5. c | 7. a | 9. a |
| 2. a | 4. b | 6. b | 8. c | 10. a |

Exercise 2

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. were, would go | 6. had, would go |
| 2. had, would lend | 7. were, would buy |
| 3. were, would go | 8. relaxed, would pass |
| 4. could speak, would apply | 9. drove, would have |
| 5. knew, would make | 10. quit, would get |

Exercise 3

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. e | 3. j | 5. f | 7. b | 9. c |
| 2. h | 4. a | 6. i | 8. g | 10. d |

Exercise 4

Answers will vary. Here are some samples:

- If I had some free time, I would go to New York.
- I would move to a bigger apartment if I had more money.
- If I had a bike, I would ride to work every day.
- I would walk to school every day if I lived closer.
- I would go to the doctor if I felt really sick.
- If I had a roommate, I wouldn't feel so lonely.
- If I knew his name, I would call him.
- If I were taller, I would join a basketball team.

Exercise 5

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. a) no b) no | 6. a) yes b) yes |
| 2. a) no b) no c) yes | 7. a) no b) yes |
| 3. a) yes b) yes | 8. a) yes b) no c) yes |
| 4. a) no b) yes c) yes | 9. a) no b) no |
| 5. a) no b) no | 10. a) no b) yes c) yes |

Exercise 6

Answers will vary.

Exercise 7

Answers may vary. Encourage your students to vary sentences that start with the if-clause with ones that start with the main clause.

- If she paid attention in class, she would understand the homework.
- If he wore a watch, he wouldn't always be late.
- If she practiced more, she would be a good tennis player.
- If he set the timer on the stove, he wouldn't burn dinner.
- If he picked up his toys, his mother wouldn't get mad.
- If he drove more slowly, he wouldn't get so many speeding tickets.
- If he quit smoking, he wouldn't cough so much.
- If she exercised more, she would feel better.
- If she spent less on clothes, she could take a vacation.
- If he studied more, he would get good grades.

(continued on the next page...)

Answer Key cont.

Exercise 8

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. were, wouldn't go | 7. wouldn't take, lived |
| 2. 'd be, didn't have | 8. drank, wouldn't be able |
| 3. didn't go, wouldn't be | 9. didn't have, wouldn't be |
| 4. didn't live, 'd visit | 10. didn't have, wouldn't give |
| 5. wouldn't marry, didn't love | 11. didn't give, 'd be |
| 6. would go, weren't | 12. didn't have, 'd go |

Exercise 9

Put students into small groups or pairs. Answers will vary.

Exercise 10

B. PRACTICE

Answers will vary. Here are some samples:

- If I pass the exam, I will celebrate.
- If John comes to the party, we'll have a lot of fun.
- If I had a dog, I would name it Coco.
- If I could speak Spanish fluently,
I would travel through South America.
- If my sister lived in a bigger apartment, I could stay over.
- If I weren't so shy, I would have more job opportunities.
- If I win the tennis match tomorrow, I will be in the finals.
- If I could afford to travel, I would go to Europe.
- If the plane arrives on time, he will take them to the concert.
- If they knew her address, they would send her a card.
- If you get the job, we will go to a restaurant and celebrate.
- If he didn't have to work, he could take me on a date.

Exercise 11

- | | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| 1. a | 3. c | 5. c | 7. c | 9. b | 11. a |
| 2. b | 4. c | 6. b | 8. a | 10. b | 12. b |

Extra Practice I

On page 17, you will find a page of sentence strips to cut up. Cut the *if* and *main* clauses into strips and give one clause to each student. Have the students search the room for the matching clause (note that there is more than one possibility in some cases—you can accept any logical, reasonable match). As an alternative task, give each pair or group a set of mixed-up strips and have them arrange all the strips into the correct order. These tasks would work well as a warm-up to this lesson or for review later on.

Extra Practice II

On page 18, you will find a comparison chart with all four conditional tenses. Comparing all the conditional tenses at once can be helpful for students to see when and why each is used. Try presenting the chart before or after the Second Conditional lesson. You can find more teaching tips on our blog (<http://blog.esllibrary.com/2013/03/14/an-easy-way-to-teach-conditionals/>) and in our Grammar Practice Worksheets section (<https://esllibrary.com/courses/88/lessons>). In that section, you'll find our lessons on the First and Third Conditional.

SPELLING NOTE:

This lesson shows the American spelling of the words *Traveling*, *Center*, *Neighbors*, and *Practice*. Most other English-speaking countries spell these words this way: *Travelling*, *Centre*, *Neighbours*, and *Practise* (when used as a verb; *Practice* when used as a noun). Make it a challenge for your students to find these words in the lesson and see if they know the alternate spellings.

Extra Practice I

SENTENCE STRIPS

If I had a bad cough,	I would go to the doctor.
If I saw a robbery,	I would call the police.
If I had a headache,	I would take an aspirin.
If I didn't pay my bills,	I would get into trouble.
If we didn't go to their party,	they would be very disappointed.
If the factory closed down,	many people would lose their jobs.
If someone walked into the building with a gun,	I would be terrified.
If my boyfriend broke up with me,	I would be very sad.
If my landlord raised the rent,	I would look for a new apartment.
If you paid attention in class,	you would understand the lesson.
If it rained,	we would have to cancel the picnic.
If I weren't on a diet,	I would order dessert.
If we took a taxi,	we would arrive on time.
If you apologized to him,	he would forgive you.
If I needed money,	I would borrow some from the bank.
If I sold my car,	I probably wouldn't get much money for it.
If it stopped raining,	we would go for a long walk.
If I saw someone drowning,	I'd jump in the water and try to save him or her.
If I were shy,	I wouldn't be able to make public speeches.

Extra Practice II

CONDITIONAL COMPARISON CHART

Name	Form	Time	Function	Example
Zero Conditional	If + present, present	Present	Use this conditional to show an outcome that happens if a specific repeated condition is met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If he takes vitamins every day, he doesn't get sick. He doesn't get sick if he takes vitamins every day.
First Conditional (Real Conditional)	If + present, will + verb	Present/ Future	Use this conditional to show a likely or possible outcome that will probably happen if a specific condition is met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If she studies for the test, she will get a good grade. She will get a good grade if she studies for the test.
Second Conditional (Unreal Conditional)	If + past, would + verb	Present/ Future	Use this conditional to show an unlikely or impossible outcome that probably wouldn't happen (unless a specific condition were met).	<p>Unlikely situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If he won the lottery, he would quit his job. He would quit his job if he won the lottery. <p>Impossible situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I had wings, I would fly to Antarctica. I would fly to Antarctica if I had wings.
Third Conditional	If + had + p.p., would + have + p.p.	Past	Use this conditional to show a past regret or different outcome that would have happened if a specific condition had been met.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I had remembered to call my friend last night, she wouldn't have sent me an angry text message. My friend wouldn't have sent me an angry text message if I had remembered to call her last night.