Part 5

What is a Conditional Sentence?

A conditional sentence is based on the word **'if'.** There are always two parts to a conditional sentence – one part beginning with **'if'** to describe a possible situation, and the second part which describes the consequence.

For example:
If it rains, we'll get wet.

We can also invert the two parts of a conditional sentence so that the **'if'** part comes second, and this is especially common in questions.

For example:
What will you do **if** you miss the train?

How can you finish the project **if** you don't have a computer?
What happens **if** the students don't pass an exam?

There are four types of conditional sentences:

1. The zero conditional

2. The first conditional

3. The second conditional

4. The third conditional

It is also possible to mix the second and third conditional. Let's look at each conditional to see how we use them.

The Zero Conditional

We use the zero conditional to talk about permanent truths, such as scientific facts, and general habits. The structure is simple:

[When ... simple present ..., ... simple present ...]
[... simple present ... if / when ... simple present ...]

examples:

If you **heat** water to 100°, it **boils**.
If you **eat** a lot, you **put on** weight.
If it **doesn't rain** for a long time, the earth **gets** very dry.
If we **go out** with friends, we normally **go** to a restaurant.
If I**'m** tired, I **go** to bed early.

MPORTANT If / When

Both **"if"** and **"when"** are used in the *zero conditionalpresent*. Using **"if"** suggests that something happens less frequently. Using **"when"** suggests that something happens regularly.

Examples:

When I have a day off from work, I usually go to the beach.
I regularly have days off from work.

If I have a day off from work, I usually go to the beach.
I rarely have days off from work.

The First Conditional

We use the first conditional to talk about a realistic situation in the present or future. The structure of the first conditional is as follows:

If / When ... **simple present** ..., ... **simple future** ...]

[... **simple future** ... **if / when** ... **simple present** ...]

Notice: that there is no future in the if- or when-clause

If I **go** to my friend's house for dinner tonight, I **will take** a bottle of wine or some flowers.

I am still not sure if I will go to his house or not.
When I **have** a day off from work, I **am going to go** to the beach.
I have to wait until I have a day off.
If the weather **is** nice, she **is going to walk** to work.
It depends on the weather.
Jerry **will help** me with my homework when he **has** time.
I have to wait until he has time.

IMPORTANT If / When

Both **"if"** and **"when"** are used in the First conditional (*future real conditional*), but the use is different from other real conditional forms. In the future real conditional, **"if"** suggests that you do not know if something will happen or not. **"When"** suggests that something will definitely happen at some point; we are simply waiting for it to occur.

Examples:

> **When** you call me, I will give you the address.
> *You are going to call me later, and at that time, I will give you the address.*
> **If** you call me, I will give you the address.
> *If you want the address, you can call me*

Another way to make first conditional sentences is to use '**unless**' which means '**only if**' or '**except**'. As with '**if**', the word 'unless' can never be followed by '**will**' but only by the present simple.

For example:
Unless you **hurry up,** you won't catch the bus.

I'll carry on doing this work, **unless** my boss **tells me** to do something else.

We'll stay at home **unless** the weather **improve**s

The Second Conditional

We use the second conditional to talk about improbable or impossible situations in the present or future. Here is the structure:

[If / When … **simple past** …, … **simple past** …]

[… **simple past**… if / when … **simple past** …

If I **had** more time, I'**d exercise** more. (But I don't have more time so I don't.)

If I **were** rich, I'**d spend** all my time travelling. (But I'm not rich so I can't.)

If she **saw** a snake, she'**d be** terrified.

If he **didn't have to** work late, he **could go** out with his girlfriend.

What **would** you **do** if you **were** offered a job in Canada?

You **wouldn't have to** walk everywhere if you **bought** a bike.

IMPORTANT **Used to**

The form "used to" expresses the idea that something was an old habit that stopped in the past. This form is commonly used in past real conditional sentences to emphasize that something was a habit..

Examples:

If I went to a friend's house for dinner, **I used to take** a bottle of wine or some flowers. I don't do that anymore.
When I had a day off from work, I **used to go** to the beach. Now, I never get time off.
If the weather was nice, she **used to walk** to work. Now, she usually drives.

IMPORTANT If / When

Both "if" and "when" are used in the past real conditional. Using **"if"** suggests that something happened less frequently. Using **"when"** suggests that something happened regularly.

Examples:

When I had a day off from work, I usually went to the beach.
I regularly had days off from work.
If I had a day off from work, I usually went to the beach.
I rarely had days off from work.

The Third Conditional

We use the third conditional to talk about impossible situations, as in the second conditional, in the past. We often use the third conditional to describe regrets. The structure is:

[If ... **past perfect** ..., ... **would have + past participle** ...]

[... **would have + past participle** ... if ... **past perfect** ...]

Examples:
If I **had owned** a car, I **would have driven** to work. But I didn't own one, so I took the bus.
She **would have traveled** around the world if she **had had** more money. But she didn't have much money, so she never traveled.
I **would have read** more as a child if I **hadn't watched** so much TV. Unfortunately, I did watch a lot of TV, so I never read for entertainment.
Mary **would have gotten** the job and **moved** to Japan if she **had studied** Japanese in school instead of French

MPORTANT Only use "If"

Only the word "if" is used with the Third if conditional (past unreal conditional) because you are discussing imaginary situations. "When" cannot be used.

Examples:

- I would have bought that computer when it had been cheaper. **Not Correct**
- I would have bought that computer if it had been cheaper. **Correct**

EXCEPTION Conditional with Modal Verbs

There are some special conditional forms for modal verbs in English:

would have + can = could have

would have + shall = should have

would have + may = might have

The words "can," "shall" and "may" cannot be used with "would have." Instead, they must be used in these special forms.

Examples:

If I **had gone to** Egypt, I **could have learned** Arabic.
If **she had had time**, she **might have gone** to the party.

The words **"could," should," "might"** and **"ought to"** include conditional, so you cannot combine them with **"would have."**

Examples:

If I **had had** more time, I **could have exercised** after work.
If **he had invited** you, you **might have gone**.

~exercises~