

IF CLAUSES

If-clauses are also known as *conditional clauses* or *conditional sentences*. This means that the event in the main clause (not counting the *if*) only takes place if the condition in the clause containing *if* is fulfilled. There are different types of conditional sentences used in different situations:

Type I (real conditional)

We use type I to talk about a condition that could possibly become true in the present or the future.

(Maybe I'll have time later.)

if + present simple, will-future

Example:

If you ask me, I will help you.

Type II (unreal condition – present)

We use type II to talk about present or future conditions that are unreal – they are not true or not likely to become true in the future.

(I know I don't have any time.)

if + simple past, would + bare infinitive

Example:

If you asked me, I would help you.

To Note

If a type II if-clause has the verb *be* in the clause containing *if*, then we use were (*not*).

Example:

If I were you, I would not do this.

(not: If I was you, ...)

Type III (unreal condition – past)

We use type III to talk about a past condition that is unreal – it did not take place.

(I didn't have any time.)

if + past perfect, would have + past participle

Example:

If I had asked me, I would have helped you.

To Note

In place of *will/would* in conditional sentences, we can use other modal verbs. However, using other verbs will change the meaning of the sentence.

Example:

If I have time, I can/could/may/might help you.

If I had time, I could/might help you.

If I had had time, I could/might have helped you.

Notes on Sentence Structure

If the clause containing *if* comes after the main clause, then we don't use a comma.

Example:

I will help you if I have time.

I would help you if I had time.

Mixed Conditional (unreal condition – past and present)

This type of mixed conditional refers to an unreal past condition and its probable result in the present. These sentences express a situation which is contrary to reality both in the past and in the present. In these mixed conditional sentences, the time is the past in the "if" clause and in the present in the main clause.

if + past perfect, would + bare infinitive

Example:

I would be a millionaire now if I had taken that job. (but I didn't take the job and I'm not a millionaire)

If you had spent all your money, you wouldn't buy this jacket. (but you didn't spend all your money and now you can buy this jacket)

Zero Type

The zero conditional is used to make statements about the real world, and often refers to general truths, such as scientific facts. In these sentences, the time is now or always and the situation is real and possible.

if + simple present, simple present

Example:

If you heat ice, it melts.

The grass gets wet if it rains.