# ESOL Entry 3 – Second Conditional

# 1 of 17 - Welcome

In this unit, you will learn to use **if** sentences to talk about the present or future results of impossible or improbable situations. This is called the second conditional. Don’t worry about the name – it’s not important to know it.

By the end of this unit you will be able to:

* Form the second conditional
* Talk about the present or future results of impossible or improbable situations
* Use the second conditional to give advice

# 2 of 17 - Examples of the second conditional

Here are two examples of **the second conditional**:

**‘If** I **had** more money, I**’d** buy a big house in the country.’

**‘If** I **was** Prime Minister, I **wouldn’t** start any wars.’

Look at the verbs. They are both in the **past simple** tense.

The words highlighted below are forms of **would**:

I**’d** = I will

I **wouldn’t** = I would not

# 3 of 17 – Key features of the second conditional

In conditional sentences there are usually two parts:

an **if clause** and the other part, which is called **the main clause.**

**‘If** I **had** more money, I**’d** buy a big house in the country.’

When the **if clause** is at the beginning, we use a comma.

# 4 of 17 – Swapping the clauses

We can swap these two parts around.

**‘If** I **had** more money, I**’d** buy a big house in the country.’

‘I**’d** buy a big house in the country **if** I **had** more money.’

When the **if clause** is second, we don’t use a comma.

Also notice that **if** and **would** are in separate parts:

We can’t say **‘If** I would have more money, I would buy a big house...’

# 5 of 17 – Typical word patterns

A good way to think about this is to look at some typical patterns:

**If** I **went**

**If** you **did**

**If** it **rained**

**If** we **didn’t**

Here we use **if** + **past simple**.

We can also say **if** + **verb 2:**

**go – went – been/gone**

These patterns sound good.

These patterns don’t usually sound natural:

**If** I would **If** you would **If** it would **If** we wouldn’t

# 6 of 17 – Using the past simple - video

Click [here](https://howcollege-my.sharepoint.com/personal/e8078_howcollege_ac_uk/Documents/Past%20Simple%20Video.mp4) to watch a video which explains why we sometimes use **past simple (verb 2)** to talk about the present or future.

Video content:

‘Using verb 1 or verb 2

Is there anything else I can help you with?

Let’s look at verb 1. Go, live, can will. Verb 1 tells us that something is near or immediate to us. Near time: I go to work every day. I live in London. Near relationships: Informal language. Can you pass me a pen? Is there anything else I can help you with? Near reality: It’s possible. If I can, I’ll give you a lift.

Let’s look at verb 2. Went, lived, could, would. Verb 2 tell us that something is distant or not immediate to us. Near time: I go to work every day. I live in London. Distant time: I went to work every day. I lived in London. Near time relationship: Informal language. Can you pass me a pen? Distant relationship: Formal language. Could you pass me a pen? (It’s more polite). Near relationship: Informal language. Is there anything else I can help you with? Distant relationship: Formal language. Was there anything else I could help you with? Near reality: It’s possible. If I can, I’ll give you a lift. Distant reality: It’s not possible. If I could, I’d give you a lift. (‘d = would). I wish I had more money

Remember that verb 2 isn’t always about the past. Was there anything else I could help you with? This is polite language. I wish I had more money. This is not possible.’

# 7 of 17 – Comparing the first and second conditional

The video explains that **past simple** or **verb 2** isn’t always about the past.

In English we use **past simple** and **would** to talk about things that are imaginary – they are impossible or unlikely to happen **in the present or the future**.

Let’s compare **the first conditional** with **the second conditional**.

**If** I **can (VERB 1**), I**’ll** give you a lift.

The first conditional = if + present + will.

This is used to talk about things that are **real**, **possible** or **likely to happen**.

**If** I **could (VERB 2**), I**’d** give you a lift.

The second conditional = if + past + would.

This is used to talk about things that are **not** **real**, **impossible** or **not** **likely to happen**.

# 8 of 17 – Explaining the second conditional - video

Click [here](https://howcollege-my.sharepoint.com/personal/e8078_howcollege_ac_uk/Documents/BLC%20Second%20conditional.mp4) to watch the second video which explains why we use the second conditional and gives some good examples.

Video content:

‘Conditionals

0 If + present simple

1 If + will

2 If + would

When we talk about the results of a possible situation, we can use verb 1. This is when we use if + will. If I go to the café, I will have a café latte. If you’re busy, I will give you a hand. If you tell me your secret, I won’t tell anyone. If you tell anyone, I’ll kill you. Notice that we only use will once. If and will are not together. We can also swap the parts. I will have a café latte if I go to the café. I will give you a hand if you’re busy. I won’t tell anyone if you tell me your secret. I’ll kill you if you tell anyone.

What about the times when the situation is not possible? This is when we use verb 2. This when we use if + would. If + would. If I had the money, I would pay you back. I don’t have the money, so I can’t pay you back. This is an imaginary situation. If I could afford it, I would go somewhere else. I can’t afford it. I want to go somewhere else. This is an imaginary situation. What would you do if you saw a crocodile in your home? It’s not real! This is an imaginary situation. I would run as fast as I could!’

# 9 of 17 – Concept check questions

Look at this example and answer the questions.

**If** I **lived** in the countryside, I**’d** keep chickens.

1.     Do I live in the countryside?

**No, I don’t. I’m just imagining it.**

2.     Do I keep chickens?

**No, I don’t. I’m just imagining it.**

3.     Am I thinking about the past, the present or the future?

**I’m thinking about**[a different] **present or future, not the past.**

# 10 of 17 – Question 1

Match the words into the correct gaps.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| scream | give | saw | do |
| had | go | could | knew |

1. If you **BLANK** lots of money, what would you **BLANK?**

2. If you **BLANK** travel anywhere in the world, where would you **BLANK?**

3. If I **BLANK** a spider in the bath, I’d **BLANK.**

4. I’d **BLANK** her a call if I **BLANK** her number.

Remember, we follow this pattern:

if + past simple + would / wouldn’t

The correct answer is:

1. If you **had** lots of money, what would you **do**?

2. If you **could** travel anywhere in the world, where would you **go**?

3.   If I **saw** a spider in the bath, I’d **scream**.

4. I’d **give** her a call if I **knew** her number.

# 11 of 17 – Question 2

Match the words into the correct gaps.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| offered | call | keep | found |
| buy | was | move | saw |

1. If I **BLANK** a lot of money in the street, I wouldn’t **BLANK** it.

2. Would you **BLANK** the police if you **BLANK** a friend shoplifting?

3.   She wouldn’t **BLANK** house, even if she was **BLANK** a million pounds!

4. If it **BLANK** my decision, I wouldn’t **BLANK** it.

Remember, we follow this pattern:

if + past simple + would / wouldn’t

The correct answer is:

1. If I **found** a lot of money in the street, I wouldn’t **keep** it.
2. Would you **call** the police if you **saw** a friend shoplifting?
3. She wouldn’t **move** house even if she was **offered** a million pounds!
4. If it **was** my decision, I wouldn’t **buy** it.

# 12 of 17 – Knowledge check

Let’s check how much we understand. Look at this example and answer the questions.

**‘If** it **wasn’t** raining, we **would** go to the beach.’

1. Is it raining?

**Yes, it is.**

2. Are they going to go to the beach?

**No, they are not because it is raining.**

3. Is this sentence about the past, the present or the future?

**This sentence is about the present.**

# 13 of 17 – Could and might as alternatives to would

We can replace **would** with some other words: **could**, **might**

**‘If** it **wasn’t** raining, we **could** go to the beach.’

**‘If** it **was** cheaper, we **might** buy it.’

# 14 of 17 – Question 3

Match the clauses to correctly complete each sentence

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| b. I could spend the day with you. | b. I could spend the day with you. | c. I would learn to play the piano. |
| d. we could get a cat. | e. she’d be happier. | f. we’d have no money. |

1. If I had more free time,
2. If you didn’t have a job,
3. If she had a better job,
4. If I didn’t have to go to work tomorrow,
5. If it was a different colour,
6. If we didn’t live on such a busy road,

The correct answer is:

1. If I had more free time, **c.** I would learn to play the piano.
2. If you didn’t have a job, **f.** we’d have no money.
3. If she had a better job, **e.** she’d be happier.
4. If I didn’t have to go to work tomorrow, **b.** I could spend the day with you.
5. If it was a different colour, **a.** I might buy it.
6. If we didn’t live on such a busy road, **d.** we could get a cat.

# 15 of 17 – Giving advice

Look at this dialogue:

**A:** I’ve got such bad toothache.

**B: If** I **were** you, I**’d** call the dentist straightaway.

**If** I **were** is used to **give advice**. We use the second conditional because we are not the other person – we’re just imagining what we would do in their situation.

Notice how it is natural to use **If** I **were**. We can say **If** I **was** as well.

# 16 of 17 – Writing task

Download the interactive PDF and complete the task by clicking [here](https://howcollege-my.sharepoint.com/personal/e8078_howcollege_ac_uk/Documents/Second%20Conditional%20-%20Sentence%20Construction%20PDF%20(Advice).pdf).​

This is designed to test your writing skills from this session. ​

Answer the questions with full sentences. ​

# 17 of 17 – Session conclusion

Well done. You have completed this session on the second conditional.

You should now:

* Be able to form the second conditional
* Be able to talk about the present or future results of impossible or improbable situations
* Be able to use the second conditional to give advice

If you have any questions about anything covered in this session, please speak to your tutor for more help.