# ESOL Entry 3 – Zero Conditional

# 1 of 12 - Welcome

In this session, you will learn to use if sentences to talk about results of situations that are true or generally true. This is called the zero conditional. Don’t worry about the name – it is not important to know it.

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

* Form the zero conditional
* Be able to use it to talk about things that are always or generally true
* Be able to use it for giving instructions
* Be able to use it for giving general advice

# 2 of 12 - The zero conditional Here are two examples of the zero conditional.

1. If I drink too much coffee, I can’t sleep at night.
2. If you add more sugar, it gets sweeter.

# Look at the verbs ‘if’. They are all in the present simple tense. We can call the present simple verb 1, and with main verbs it uses the helping word do.

# 3 of 12 – Key features of the zero conditional

In conditional sentences there are usually two parts: an if clause and the other part, which is called the main clause. For example:

‘If I drink too much coffee, I can’t sleep at night.’

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

We can swap these two parts around. For example:

1. If I drink too much coffee, I can’t sleep at night.
2. I can’t sleep at night, if I drink too much coffee.

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

# 4 of 12 – Using the present simple

Present simple is about general time, for example:

1. ‘I like cats.’
2. ‘I live in a small house.’

It is used for habits. For example, ‘I turn the heating up in the winter’ or ‘he usually goes to the local shop.’

It is used for instructions. For example, ‘take the number 9 bus to town’ or ‘put it in the oven for 20 minutes.’

If + present simple, means that in that situation this happens:

1. If it’s cold, I turn the heating up.
2. If he needs some milk, he usually goes to the local shop.
3. If you want to go to town, take the number 9 bus.
4. If you want to have the pizza, put it in the oven for 20 minutes.

Notice the use of ‘if’ and ‘needs’ and ‘want to.’

Other examples:

1. If you want sit, there are some tables upstairs.
2. If you want to try anything on, the fitting room is over there.

There are two parts to these sentences. ‘If you want to sit’ and ‘there are some tables upstairs.’ We can swap these around so it becomes, ‘there are some tables upstairs if you want to sit.’ The second sentence can also be swapped, ‘the fitting room is over there if you want to try anything on.’

# 5 of 12 – Question 1

Using the following words, fill in the blanks of the sentences below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Wake up | Like |
| Can | Get |
| Add | Miss |
| Don’t | Don’t have |

1. If I **BLANK** breakfast, I **BLANK** something to eat on my way to work.
2. You **BLANK** ask me if you **BLANK** understand.
3. If I **BLANK** coffee in the morning, I don’t **BLANK** properly.
4. If you **BLANK** your food spicy, **BLANK** more chilli.

The correct answers are:

1. If I **miss** breakfast, I **get** something to eat on my way to work.
2. You **can** ask me if you **don’t** understand.
3. If I **don’t have** coffee in the morning, I don’t **wake up** properly.
4. If you **like** your food spicy, you can **add** more chilli.

# 6 of 12 – Question 2

Using the following words, fill in the blanks of the sentences below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| See | It’s |
| Press | Tell |
| Take | Catch |
| Change | Go out |

1. I usually **BLANK** the bus if **BLANK** raining.
2. If you **BLANK** the clutch in, you can **BLANK** gear.
3. **BLANK** a key if you go **BLANK**.
4. If you **BLANK** her, can you **BLANK** her to call me?

The correct answers are:

1. I usually **catch** the bus if **it’s** raining.
2. If you **press** the clutch in, you can **change** gear.
3. **Take** a key if you go **out**.
4. If you **see** her, can you **tell** her to call me?

# 7 of 12 – Question 3

Match the following statements into ‘giving instructions’ or ‘Talking about something that’s generally or always true.’

1. If I miss breakfast, I get something to eat on my way to work.
2. You can ask me if you don’t understand.
3. If I don’t have coffee in the morning, I don’t wake up properly.
4. If you like your food spicy, add more chilli.
5. I usually catch the bus if it’s raining.
6. If you press the clutch in, you can change gear.
7. Take a key if you go out.
8. If you see her, can you tell her to call me?

The correct answers are:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Talking about something that’s generally or always true | Giving instructions |
| If I miss breakfast, I get something to eat on my way to work. | You can ask me if you don’t understand. |
| If I don’t have coffee in the morning, I don’t wake up properly. | If you like your food spicy, add more chilli. |
| I usually catch the bus if it’s raining. | Take a key if you go out. |
| If you press the clutch in, you can change gear. | If you see her, can you tell her to call me? |

# 8 of 12 – Map instructions

Similar to the zero conditional, instead of using if we can also use words like when, after, before. The example below shows these being used in the form of giving directions on a map.

* **When** you want to leave the station turn left.
* Keep walking and just **before** you reach the cinema turn left.
* **After** you pass the newsagent’s, look for the red door with the number 24 on it.
* **If** you can see the park, you have gone too far.

# 9 of 12 – Map instructions part 2

Here is another example:

* When you leave the station, look for wood street.
* After you pass the post office, turn right.
* Keep going and just before you get to the butcher’s, look for number 36.
* If you walk past the supermarket, then you have gone too far.

# 10 of 12 – Using should

We can also use the zero conditional with should to give general advice. For example:

1. If you lose your debit card, you should call your bank.
2. If you want to get fit, you should join a gym.

# 11 of 12 – Writing task

Download the interactive Zero Conditional Writing Prompt PDF and complete the task.​

This is designed to test your writing skills from this session. ​Answer the questions with full sentences. ​

# 12 of 12 – End

Well done. You have completed this session on Zero Conditional.

You should now be able to:

* Form the zero conditional
* Be able to use it to talk about things that are always or generally true
* Be able to use it for giving instructions
* Be able to use it for giving general advice

If you are unsure or have any questions about any of these topics, make a note and speak to your tutor for more help.