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Conditional Sentences

- When the occurrence of one event depends on the occurrence of another event, then we use a Conditional sentence to express it.
- In a conditional sentence, there is an independent clause and a dependent clause. The dependent clause is the clause which almost always begins with "if."
- In this way, a conditional sentence has two parts, the if-clause and the main clause. The main clause depends on the if-clause.
- A conditional sentence is only a conditional sentence if it has both of these parts.
- Sentences containing the word **if** are called **conditional sentences** because they usually express a condition. These clauses express a condition – something which must happen first so that something else can happen.

Apart from if, conditional sentences can also begin with the following words :

- If
- When
- Unless
- Even if
- Only if
- In case

Now let's understand the examples given below :

- If you invite her, she will come. (You have to invite her, otherwise, she won't come. Here the first thing you need to do is to invite her. If that does not happen, the second thing would not happen)

Some simple examples of conditional sentences are given below :

- If he comes, ask him to wait.
- If it rains, we will get wet.
- If you study hard, you will pass your exam.

We can also make conditional clauses without using 'if'. Look at the examples given below :

- **If** I had known his real motive, I wouldn't have supported him.

We can express this sentence without using 'If' :

- **Had I known** his real motive, I wouldn't have supported him.

We can also make conditional forms by using '**were**' at the beginning of the sentence.

- **Were I you**, I wouldn't permit this. (= If I were you, I would not permit this.)

We can also make conditional sentences with the use of '**unless**'.

- **Unless** you work hard, you will not pass. (= If you do not work hard, you will not pass.)

Types of Conditional Sentences

We can classify conditional sentences in the following four types :

1. The zero conditional
2. The type 1 conditional
3. The type 2 conditional
4. The type 3 conditional

1. The zero conditional

In a zero conditional sentence, we use a present tense in both parts of the sentence. These are used to talk about real and possible situations. The situations which are real and totally depend on the occurrence of the first event. Look at the below examples of type zero conditional sentences :

- If you **give** respect, you **get** respect.
- If you **heat** ice, it **melts**.

2. Type 1 conditional

Type 1 conditional sentences are used to talk about possible situations and their probable results. In this case, we use a **simple present tense** in the **if-clause** and **will + infinitive** in the main clause.

Understand the sentences given below :

- If I **am** hungry, I **will get** something to eat.
- If **you are** hungry, you **can eat** an apple.
- If you work hard, you will succeed.
- If you ask him, he will help you.
- If you invite them, they will come.

3. Type 2 conditional

These sentences are used to talk about an unlikely condition and its probable result. In this type of sentences, use Simple past tense in the if-clause and would + infinitive in the main clause. These are used to talk about situations that are unlikely to occur.

- If you asked him, he would help you.
- If you studied hard you would pass your exam.
- If you invited them, they would come.
- I **would buy** a home if I **won** the lottery.

Type 2 conditional is used to refer to the present situation or the future situation. However, it suggests that the situation is less probable, improbable or imaginary.

- If you ate too much food, you would fall ill.

In the second conditional, when the verb in the if-clause is a form of 'be', we use **were** instead of **was**. Note that this use of **were** is possible and recommended with all subjects. **Was** is also becoming acceptable, but many grammarians still insist that you should use **were**.

- If she were my daughter, I wouldn't let her drop out of school. (NOT If she was my daughter, ...)
- If I were you, I wouldn't trust him.
- If they were really interested in the offer, they would contact you.

In some cases, however, **if I was** is also possible. For example, when are talking about real situations that happened in the past, the use of **if I was** (or if he /she/it was) is considered more correct.

- **If I was** in a hurry, I usually skipped my breakfast.
- **If she was** angry, she would shut herself up in her room.

Note that in the sentences given above, it is possible to replace the **if** with **when**.

- When I was in a hurry, I usually skipped my breakfast.
- When she was angry, she would shut herself up in her room.

4. Type 3 conditional

In type 3 conditional sentence, the tense in the "if clause" is the past perfect and the tense in the "main clause" is the perfect conditional (would have +

infinitive). These sentences are used to talk about imaginary or improbable situations. We use third conditional for the past situations that did not happen.

- If you had invited them, they would have come.
- If you had asked him, he would have helped you.
- She **would have come** if he **had invited** her.
- If she hadn't skipped her breakfast, her grades would have improved.

Common Errors in Conditional Sentences :

1. Common Error in Zero Conditional sentences :

In the zero conditional, both clauses are in the present tense. A common mistake is to use 'will' in the main clause:

- **Incorrect** - Water boils when it will reach 100°C.
- **Correct** - Water boils when **it reaches** 100°C.

- **Incorrect** - When you leave the milk out, it will become sour.
- **Correct** - When you leave the milk out, it becomes sour.

2. Common Error in first Conditional sentences :

The most common mistake is to put "will" in the conditional clause. The conditional clause must remain in the simple present tense.

- **Incorrect:** If you will study more, your English will get better.
- **Correct:** If you study more, your English will get better.

- **Incorrect:** Unless you will ask him, he won't answer.
Correct: Unless you ask him, he won't answer

3. Common Error in Second Conditional sentences :

The most common mistake in second conditional is putting "would" in the conditional clause. The conditional clause must be written in the simple past tense.

- **Incorrect:** If I would win the big prize, I would take you to dinner at a fancy restaurant.
- **Correct:** If I won the big prize, I would take you to dinner at a fancy restaurant.

- **Incorrect:** I would be the happiest boy alive if I would have a monkey for a pet.

- **Correct:** I would be the happiest boy alive if I had a monkey for a pet.

4. Common Error in Third Conditional Sentence :

Like the second conditional, the most common mistake for third conditional is putting "would" in the conditional clause.

- **Incorrect:** If she had would have filled the car up with gas, she would not have been late.
- **Correct:** If she had filled the car up with gas, she would not have been late.
- **Incorrect:** If you would have studied more, your English would have improved.
- **Correct:** If you had studied more, your English would have improved.
- **Incorrect:** If I would have known earlier, I wouldn't have done it.
- **Correct:** If I had known earlier, I wouldn't have done it.

Conditional Sentences: Other Important rules

1. When the condition comes in the first sentence, a comma is usually used after the conditional clause:

For examples :

- If Tommy eats his vegetables, he will be allowed to eat dessert.
- Unless you finish your degree in education, you cannot be hired as a certified teacher.
- When you leave the dog in the house, he tears up the furniture.

2. When the condition comes in the second sentence, no comma is needed :

For examples:

- You will be allowed to listen to music during class if you promise to complete your work.
- Turn off the computer when you are finished.
- You won't pass this class unless you study.
- The rain will turn into snow unless the temperature rises soon.

3. When both the sentences are negative in conditional sentences, prefer to use 'Unless/Until' instead of 'If':

- If you don't study diligently, you'll never understand this subject. **(Wrong usage in formal English)**
- Unless you study diligently, you'll never understand this subject. **(Correct)**

Now try to answer the following questions depending on their context. Leave your answers in the comment section. We will review your answers. I'll post the correct answers in comment section itself.

1. If she (invite) me, I (go)
2. If it (rain), we (cancel) the match.
3. If I (get) a promotion, I (buy) a car.
4. If she (be late), we (go) without her.
5. If you (ask) more politely, I (buy) you a drink.
6. If you (not behave), I (throw) you out.
7. If he (win) the first prize, his mother (be) happy.
8. If he (get) proper medical care, he (survive)
9. If the drought (continue), plants and animals (perish).



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