

Future Conditionals

A/ Future “Real” Conditional

The **Future Real Conditional** describes what **you think** you **will do** in **a specific situation** in the **future**. It is **different** from other **Real Conditional forms** because, unlike the present or the past, **you do not know what will happen in the future**.

With future real conditional you are usually imagining or predicting the future although this form is called “real”. It is in fact called “real” because **it is still possible** that the action might **occur in the future**.

Let us take a look at the following examples and compare them to the Future Unreal Conditional examples further down the page.

Examples:

- If I **go** to my friend's house for dinner tonight, I **will take** some cakes and cookies or just 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.
- I **am going to read** if there **is** nothing on TV.
IT DEPENDS ON THE TV SCHEDULE.

- A: What **are you going to do** if it rains?
B: I **am going to stay** at home.

IF IT, I

The Form

[**If / When** ... **Simple Present** ..., ... **Future Tense** ...]

[... **Future Tense** ... **if / when** ... **Simple Present** ...]

N.B.: that there is no future in the if- or when-clause (i.e. the simple future is not used)

N.B.: 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**.
- ✓ Notice also that the **Simple Future** is not used in **if-clauses** or **when-clauses**.

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.

B/ Future “Unreal” Conditional

1st Use → The Future “Unreal” Conditional is used to talk about **imaginary situations in the future**. It is only used when a speaker needs **to emphasize** that **something is impossible**.

However, ***it is not as common as the abovementioned “Future Real Conditional”*** because English speakers often leave open the possibility that **anything MIGHT happen** in the future.

Examples:

- If I **had** a day off from work next week, I **would go** to the beach.
I DON'T HAVE A DAY OFF FROM WORK.
- I am busy next week. If I **had** time, I **would come** to your party.
I CAN'T COME.
- Jerry **would help** me with my homework tomorrow if he **didn't have** to work.
HE DOES HAVE TO WORK TOMORROW.

FORM 1 (Most Common Form)

[**“If”** ... **Simple Past** ... , ... **would** + verb ...]

[... **would** + verb ... **“if”** ... **Simple Past** ...]

N.B.: Notice that this form looks the same as **Present Unreal Conditional**: for example “If I owned a car (now, actually), I would drive to work. But I don't own a car.” “I would read more if I didn't watch so much TV (today).”

* * *

2nd Use → This form 2 of the Future “Unreal” Conditional is **also** used to talk about **imaginary situations in the future**.

N.B.: Native speakers **often prefer** this form over **Form 1** to **emphasize** that **the conditional form is in the future rather than the present**. Also notice in the examples below that this form can be used **in the if-clause**, **the result**, or **both parts** of the sentence.

Examples:

- If I **were going** to Fiji next week, I **would be taking** my scuba diving gear with me. **In “if-clause” and “result.”**
I AM NOT GOING TO GO TO FIJI AND I AM NOT GOING TO TAKE MY SCUBA GEAR WITH ME.

- If I **were not visiting** my grandmother tomorrow, I **would help** you study. In **"if-clause"**
I AM GOING TO VISIT MY GRANDMOTHER TOMORROW.
- I am busy next week. If I **had** time, I **would be coming** to your party. In **"result"**
I AM NOT GOING TO COME TO YOUR PARTY.

FORM 2 (to emphasize the future)

[**"If"** ... **were** + present participle ... , ... **would be** + present participle (+ing) ...]

[... **would be** + present participle (+ing) ... **"if"** ... were + present participle ...]

* * *

3rd Use → This Form 3 of the Future Unreal Conditional is **a variation of Form 2** which is also used to talk about **imaginary situations in the future**.

N.B.: Notice that this form is only different from Form 2 in the if-clause. Native speakers use Form 3 to **emphasize** that the **conditional form is a plan or prediction** in the same way **"be going to"** is used to indicate a plan or prediction.

Examples:

- If I **were going to go** to Fiji next week, I **would be taking** my scuba diving gear with me.
I AM NOT GOING TO GO TO FIJI AND I AM NOT GOING TO TAKE MY SCUBA GEAR WITH ME.
- If I **were not going to visit** my grandmother tomorrow, I would help you study.
I AM GOING TO VISIT MY GRANDMOTHER TOMORROW.

FORM 3

[**"If"** ... **were going to** + **verb** ... , ... **would be** + present participle (+ing) ...]

[... **would be** + present participle (+ing) ... **"if"** ... **were going to** + **verb** ...]

N.B.: IMPORTANT Only use "If": Only the word "if" is used with the Future Unreal Conditional because you are discussing imaginary situations. "When" cannot be used.

Examples:

- I would buy that computer tomorrow **when** it were cheaper. **Not Correct**
- I would buy that computer tomorrow **if** it were cheaper. **Correct**

Other uses → EXCEPTION Conditional with Modal Verbs: *there are some special conditional forms for modal verbs in English:*

would + can = could

would + shall = should

would + may = might

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

Examples:

- If I **went** to Egypt next year, I ~~would~~ **can** learn Arabic. Unfortunately, that's not possible. **Not Correct**
- If I **went** to Egypt next year, I could learn Arabic. Unfortunately, that's not possible. **Correct**

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

Examples:

- If I **didn't have** to work tonight, I ~~would~~ **could** go to the fitness center. **Not Correct**
- If I **didn't have** to work tonight, I **could** go to the fitness center. **Correct**

C/ "Future Real Conditional" vs. "Future Unreal Conditional":

To help you **more** understand the difference between the Future **Real** Conditional and the Future **Unreal** Conditional, compare the examples below:

Examples:

- If you **help** me move tomorrow, I **will buy** you dinner. Future **Real** Conditional
I DON'T KNOW IF YOU CAN HELP ME.
- If you **helped** me move tomorrow, I **would buy** you dinner. Future **Unreal** Conditional
YOU CAN'T HELP ME, OR YOU DON'T WANT TO HELP ME.

D/ EXERCISE: *complete the text below with the appropriate conditional form.*

1. Researchers are visiting Loch Ness next week to see if they can find signs of the Loch Ness Monster. I seriously doubt they will find anything. If they did actually manage to find something, I am sure they

(become) world famous.

2. I am going to go to California next week on business. If I have enough time, I (visit) my friends in Los Angeles.

3. Sally has always been interested in pre-Columbian cultures. When she (go) to Mexico, she (visit) Chichen Itza, the most famous Mayan site in the Yucatan.

4. We are driving from Las Vegas to Death Valley next week by way of Pahrump, a town located on the edge of the infamous Area 51. Area 51 is well known for its UFO sightings. If I (see) any aliens, I will be sure to take a picture for you. Just kidding!

5. I am afraid I won't be able to come to your wedding next week because my company is sending me to New York to attend a trade show. I (miss, never) your wedding if I (have) a choice in the matter.

6. I (interpret) for you at the conference tomorrow if I (be) not already scheduled to work at the UN. I have a friend who (do) it for you if she (be) not busy. Why don't I give her a call to see what her schedule is like.

7. The mountain climbing team (attempt) to conquer Mount Everest next month if the weather conditions (be) suitable. I (join) them in the ascent if I (can) . Unfortunately, I broke my leg last month while training in Alaska.

8. If Sarah (go) to university, she (be) the first person in her family to get an advanced education. She has applied to many schools, but she really wants to go to MIT. If she (get) accepted to the university, she (move) to Boston to study astrophysics.

9. If mankind (do) not do something about the destruction of the rain forest, global warming (cause) dramatic changes in weather conditions all over the world.

10. Even if they managed to convince him to run for president in the next election, he (be, never) elected. His ideas are too dramatic and unconventional to be accepted by the mainstream.