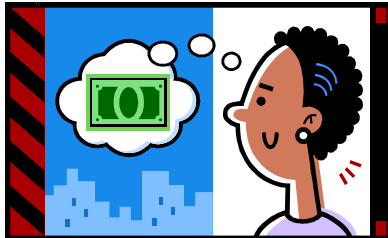


The Second Conditional

Look at this example:



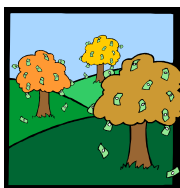
If I won the lottery, I would buy a new house, a new car, and have a luxury holiday.

What tense is used in the first part of this **if/conditional** statement?

Yes, if you can remember back to Module 1, you will see that this sentence uses the past simple in the first part of the sentence. It also uses **would + infinitive** (instead of **will**) in the second part. Do you know why this is?

This is an example of the **2nd Conditional**. Whereas there was a strong likelihood of rain occurring in the first conditional example, the chances of winning the lottery jackpot, in the UK at least, are 1 in 13,983,816, so this is an unreal, unlikely, or hypothetical situation and we use the 2nd conditional to express such events.

You can also use the conditional in questions, and with negative forms:



If money grew on trees, would it have any value?

If elections were abolished, we wouldn't live in a democratic society.



If I were taller, I wouldn't need to use a ladder.

Common mistakes

1. Students often get confused when to use **would** and put it into sentences where it isn't needed.

If I would win the lottery...

Would is not usually used in the **if** part of the sentence.

2. Students sometimes use **when** instead of **if** even if the sentence is a hypothetical one. In some languages this is how the sentences are constructed so it is often due confusion between their native language and English. An example that an English learner might make is:

When I win the lottery I would buy a house...

3. Look again at the third example from the previous page:

If I were taller, I wouldn't need to use a ladder.

You may have noticed that it says '*If I were*' and not '*If I was*'. It is correct to use *were* in conditional sentences but this is falling out of common use. Most people actually say '*If I was rich, I would.....*'



Look at the following statements by contestants in the (fictional) 'World Idol' competition:

Amy: If I won World Idol, I would be really happy.

Joe: I'd be over the moon if I won.

Marcin: If I win I'll be really famous. I think that is very good.

Manuela: I think I have a good chance of winning. If I do, it'll make a huge difference to my life.

Brad: I've got a great voice and I'm trying really hard but there is a lot of great competition. I can't imagine what will happen if I win.

Who do you think is most confident of winning? Why do you say this? We will discuss this on the next page...

Discussion of World Idol contestant comments

Marcin, Manuela and Brad all use the first conditional, indicating a real chance of the event happening (or at least a belief in a real chance of it happening!)

Amy and Joe use the second conditional. For some reason they feel like winning is less of a possibility for them.



Certainly, little Samantha watching the event from home might imagine what it would be like to win – but she's not even a contestant and so she'd definitely use the 2nd and not the first conditional:

Samantha: 'I'd love to be up there with them. If I won, I'd be a major superstar overnight.'

Let's look more closely at 1st and 2nd Conditional examples. Which conditional form (first or second) would be best to talk about the following situations? Can you make the appropriate sentences?

1. If (you) can live anywhere in the world.
2. If (you) have free time this evening.
3. If (you) can go on holiday next week.
4. If (you) find £100 on the street.
5. If (you) are famous for a day.

Our suggested answers are in the red box below.

If you got those correct, or can see why you didn't get them correct, then well done!

The answers to the questions above are:

1. If I could live anywhere in the world, it would be Barbados. (2nd)
2. If I have free time this evening, I'll go for a run. (1st)
3. If I can go on holiday next week, I'll try and find a bargain. (1st – could also be 2nd if it is unlikely)
4. If I found £100, I would take it to the police station.
5. If I were famous for a day, I would fly in a private plane for lunch in Monte Carlo.