

The Second Conditional

Grammar Guide & Practice Sheet — Level B1–B2

Name: _____ Date: _____

SECTION A — What Is the Second Conditional?

A1. Definition & Use

The second conditional is used to talk about **imaginary, hypothetical, or unlikely situations** in the **present or future**. It describes what **would** happen if something **were true** — but it probably isn't, or it's just a fantasy.

- Imaginary present: *If I had a car, I would drive to work.* (I don't have a car.)
- Hypothetical future: *If I won the lottery, I would travel the world.* (I probably won't win.)
- Giving advice: *If I were you, I would talk to her directly.*
- Dreams & wishes: *If I could fly, I would visit every country.*

⚠ *Key idea: The situation is NOT real. You are imagining it.*

A2. The Formula

STRUCTURE

If + subject + past simple , subject + would + base verb

⚠ *The IF clause uses PAST SIMPLE. The main clause uses WOULD + base verb. The order can be reversed!*

<i>IF clause first</i>	<i>Main clause first</i>
<i>If I had more money, I would buy a house.</i>	<i>I would buy a house if I had more money.</i>
<i>If she knew the answer, she would tell us.</i>	<i>She would tell us if she knew the answer.</i>
<i>If they lived closer, we would see them more.</i>	<i>We would see them more if they lived closer.</i>

⚠ *When the IF clause comes first, use a comma. When the main clause comes first, NO comma is needed.*

SECTION B — Special Cases

B1. Were vs Was — The “If I Were” Rule

In formal English, we use **were** for **all subjects** in second conditional IF clauses — not was. This is called the **subjunctive mood**.

✗ Informal / Spoken	✓ Formal / Written
<i>If I was you, I would apologise.</i>	<i>If I were you, I would apologise.</i>
<i>If she was taller, she could model.</i>	<i>If she were taller, she could model.</i>
<i>If he was here, he would know.</i>	<i>If he were here, he would know.</i>

⚠ 'If I were you' is a fixed expression used to give advice. It always uses **WERE**, never **WAS**.

B2. Could & Might Instead of Would

We can replace **would** with **could** (ability/possibility) or **might** (less certain possibility):

Modal	Meaning	Example
would	<i>certain result (in the imagination)</i>	<i>If I had time, I would read more.</i>
could	<i>ability or possibility</i>	<i>If I had time, I could learn the guitar.</i>
might	<i>uncertain possibility</i>	<i>If I had time, I might travel more.</i>

SECTION C — First vs Second Conditional

Students often confuse these two. Here is the key difference:

	First Conditional	Second Conditional
Reality	<i>Real / likely situation</i>	<i>Imaginary / unlikely situation</i>
Time	<i>Present or future</i>	<i>Imaginary present or future</i>
IF clause	<i>If + present simple</i>	<i>If + past simple</i>
Main clause	<i>will + base verb</i>	<i>would + base verb</i>
Example	<i>If it rains, I will stay home.</i>	<i>If it rained, I would stay home.</i>
Meaning	<i>It might really rain.</i>	<i>It probably won't rain (or I'm just imagining).</i>

SECTION D — Practice Exercises

Exercise 1 — Complete the Sentence

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

1. If I _____ (have) more free time, I _____ (learn) to paint.

2. She _____ (be) much happier if she _____ (live) near the sea.

3. If he _____ (know) her number, he _____ (call) her.

4. What _____ you _____ (do) if you _____ (lose) your job?

5. If I _____ (be) you, I _____ (not/accept) that offer.

6. They _____ (travel) more if they _____ (not/have) so many responsibilities.

7. If she _____ (could) choose any career, she _____ (become) an architect.

8. I _____ (might/move) abroad if I _____ (speak) another language fluently.

Exercise 2 — Correct the Mistake

Each sentence has one mistake. Find it and rewrite the sentence correctly.

1. If I would have more money, I would buy a new car.
→ _____
2. If she was me, she would quit that job immediately.
→ _____
3. What would you do if you will win the lottery?
→ _____
4. I would travel the world if I will have the chance.
→ _____
5. If he knew the truth, he will be very upset.
→ _____

6. She would be a great teacher if she will study education.

→

Exercise 3 — First or Second?

Choose the correct conditional form and explain why.

1. If it _____ (rain) tomorrow, we _____ (cancel) the picnic.

2. If I _____ (be) a bird, I _____ (fly) everywhere.

3. If you _____ (study) hard, you _____ (pass) the exam.

4. If she _____ (live) in Paris, her French _____ (be) much better.

5. If the train _____ (leave) on time, we _____ (arrive) by 6.

6. If I _____ (could) turn back time, I _____ (make) different choices.

Exercise 4 — Finish the Sentence!

Complete each second conditional sentence with your own ideas. Be creative!

1. If I could live anywhere in the world, I would...

2. If I had one superpower, I would...

3. If I didn't have to work or study, I would...

4. If I were the president / prime minister of my country, I would...

5. If I could invite any person in history to dinner, I would choose...

6. If money were no object, I would...

Exercise 5 — Speaking: Dream Big!

Discuss these questions with your tutor. Give full second conditional answers!

- If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?
- If you could speak any language perfectly, which would you choose and why?
- If you could live in any time period in history, when would you choose?
- If you could have dinner with any celebrity or public figure, who would it be?
- If you could swap lives with someone for a week, who would you choose?
- If you found a large amount of money on the street, what would you do?
- If you could instantly master any skill, what would you choose?
- If you were stranded on a desert island, what three things would you bring?

Answer Key (Teacher Use)

Exercise 1: 1. had/would learn 2. would be/lived 3. knew/would call 4. would you do/lost 5. were/wouldn't accept 6. would travel/didn't have 7. could/would become 8. might move/spoke

Exercise 2: 1. If I had more money... 2. If I were you... 3. ...if you won... 4. ...if I had the chance 5. ...he would be... 6. ...if she studied...

Exercise 3: 1. rains/will cancel (1st) 2. were/would fly (2nd) 3. study/will pass (1st) 4. lived/would be (2nd) 5. leaves/will arrive (1st) 6. could/would make (2nd)