

# The Conditional Tense

The conditional tense—also sometimes referred to as the conditional mood—communicates what happens, will happen, might have happened, or would have happened if we do, will do, or did do something. The situation described can be real or imaginary; in either case, an action relies on something else (a condition).

For that reason, most English sentences using the conditional include a **dependent if clause**. They set up a scenario of possibility signalled by the **if clause** and completed with **the speculative (hypothetical) result of that circumstance**.

***Example:** If I had known you were going to the store [possible scenario], I would have asked you to pick up some eggs [speculative result].*

## A. Zero Conditional

It is used to talk about things which are **always true** like a **scientific truth**. The independent and dependent clauses both include the **simple present verb tense**. The word “**when**” can often replace the word “**if**” in the Zero Conditional without changing the meaning.

*Examples:*

*If (or When) you heat water enough, it boils.*

*If (or When) the temperature rises, the body perspires to release heat.*

## B. Type 1 Conditional

It refers to a present or future real situation—i.e., a possible condition and its likely result (it is used to talk about possibilities in the present or in the future). The dependent “if” clause includes **the simple present** tense and the main clause uses the **simple future**.

*Examples:*

*If you spend all of your money now, you **will not have** any left for vacation.*

*If you park in that spot, you **will get** a ticket.*

## C. Type 2 Conditional

It expresses a situation that **was not real or not happening in the present** (*imaginary situations in the present or in the future*) and **its probable result**. The “if” clause includes **the simple past tense** and **the main clause** is in **the present conditional or present continuous conditional**.

**Examples:**

*If you got [simple past] more sleep, you would feel [present conditional] more alert in the morning.*

*If I had [simple past] better brakes, I would not be hearing [present continuous conditional] a grinding sound every time I slow or stop the car.*

### **D. Type 3 Conditional**

It refers to a situation that **didn't take place** and its possible result **at a former time (imagine situation in the past)**. The “if” clause includes **the past perfect**, and the **main clause** uses the **perfect conditional or the perfect continuous conditional**.

**Examples:**

*If you had spent [past perfect] all your money then, you would not have had [perfect conditional] any left for vacation.*

*If I had replaced [past perfect] my brakes, I would not have been hearing [perfect continuous conditional] a grinding sound every time I slowed or stopped the car.*