

## Conditional Clauses and Verb Tenses

		if subject +verb, <b>would</b> is not possible		subject verb the verb can be in a conditional tense			
Conditionals	Result			present simple		present simple	
0	inevitable	<b>if</b>	<b>you</b>	<b>boil</b>	<b>water,</b>	<b>it</b>	<b>evaporates</b>
1	predictable	<b>if</b>	<b>you</b>	present simple	<b>boil</b>	<b>that water, it</b>	future simple <b>will evaporate</b>
2	hypothetical	<b>if</b>	<b>you</b>	past simple	<b>boiled</b>	<b>that water, it</b>	conditional present <b>would evaporate</b>
3	impossible	<b>if</b>	<b>you</b>	past perfect	<b>had boiled</b>	<b>water, it</b>	conditional present perfect <b>would have evaporated</b>

Modal verbs, e.g. 'should, could, may, ought to, might, had better, must', can replace 'would' in some circumstances.

'when', 'before', 'after', 'unless', 'by the time', 'as long as', 'provided that', and other terms can replace 'if' in some circumstances.

If' can be replaced by subject-verb inversion.

The 'if' clause can represent the second event.

The clauses can be reversed and the comma is then dropped.

'If I would ...' is usually wrong. ~~If I would eat...~~

Some modal verbs can occur in the past tense in the 'if' clause.

If a dollar could buy two candies, two dollars could buy four candies.

If + subjunctive is possible.

The past subjunctive 'If I were' is standard English.

Had you boiled that water, it would have evaporated.

By the time he retires, he will have been working here for 40 years.

Water evaporates if you boil it.

Try the past 'If I ate', present 'If I eat' or subjunctive 'If I should eat'.

If I could have seen his face, I would have laughed.

= If a dollar bought two candies, two dollars would buy four candies.

We need to rethink our plan if that rumour (should) be true.

If I were you, I would think twice before sending that mail.

### Potentially confusing uses of 'if'

Wish: If only he would apply himself to maths!

If only I hadn't said that!

Wish + instruction: If you would like to work on this job, please contact me = If you wish to work on this job, you should contact me.

Polite request: If you would come this way, please.

Missing inferred clause: If you will be back in 3 years, choose a 3 year term at 1% interest. (= If (you know that) you will be back in 3 years...)

### Sentences in which 'if' does not introduce a genuine condition (genuine = 'if A is true, B is true')

Whether: I didn't know if he was coming. = I didn't know whether he was coming

In view of the fact that: If you have eaten so much, why are you still hungry? = Given that you have eaten so much, why are you...?

In order to/For: If it is to be effective, the law will have to be applied fairly. =To be effective, the law will have to be applied fairly.