CONDITIONALS • Zero/first/second conditional

We use the Zero Conditional (If + Present Simple, Present Simple) to talk about facts, rules and situations which are always true (one thing always follows the other).

Snow melts if/when you heat it. (this is what always happens)
If/When you eat too many sweets, you get fat.
If/When you press this button, the computer comes on.

We wouldn’t be late for school every day if she got up ten minutes earlier. (but she doesn’t get up 10 minutes earlier)
If Tom were taller, he would play basketball much better. (but Tom is not taller)
If I knew her telephone number, I would call her. (but I don’t know her telephone number)

In conditional sentences instead of if we can also use: when (if something is sure to happen), provided that, as soon as, as long as, unless (= if not).

I’ll switch on the light when it gets dark.
He’ll lend you his car provided that you bring it back tomorrow.
They’ll call us as soon as their plane lands.
I’ll help you with maths as long as you help me to write my English essay.
She won’t let me watch TV unless I tidy up my room first. (She won’t let me watch TV if I don’t tidy up my room first.)

In the Second Conditional sentences after I, he, she and it we can use both was and were. Were is more common than was in a written and formal language.

If he was/were more ambitious, he would apply for a more challenging position.

1. Circle the option which has a similar meaning to the original sentence. Explain your choice.
   1. If it snows heavily, we won’t go skiing.
      a) It might snow heavily.
      b) It doesn’t snow.
   2. If she was interested, she wouldn’t keep cancelling dates with you.
      a) She might be interested.
      b) She isn’t interested.
   3. If I had a lot of money, I still wouldn’t give up my job.
      a) I might have a lot of money.
      b) I don’t have a lot of money.
   4. If they needed your help, they would call you.
      a) They might need your help.
      b) They don’t need your help.
   5. If my boss wants me to work on Saturday, I’ll say ‘No’.
      a) My boss might want me to work on Saturday.
      b) My boss doesn’t want me to work on Saturday.

2. Unjumble the sentences to form conditional sentences.
   1. I would / could / she / if / about / speak / humans / animals / they / complain
   If animals could speak, they would complain about us humans.
   2. take / you / aspirin / will / down / feel / if / better / an / you / lie / and
   You take aspirin will down feel if better and
   3. them / rude / and / if / him / people / ignores / he / are / to / calm / stays
   If people
   4. didn’t / she / take / breathing / jogging / problems / have / she / would / up / if
   She
   5. school / if / hurry / late / Tom / we / be / doesn’t / up / will / for
   If Tom
   6. apologise / I / her / were / to / you / I / wouldn’t / if
   I
3 Circle the correct verb form in each sentence.
1. If I go to bed after midnight, [am always / I'll always be / would always be] in the morning.
2. I don't / won't / wouldn't tell you anything if you can't keep a secret.
3. If he could speak good English, he finds / will find / would find a well-paid job in London.
4. I don't / won't / wouldn't trust these people if I were you.
5. George comes / will come / would come if you promise not to talk about school all the time.
6. If plants don't have enough water, they die / will die / would die.
7. Is it / Will it / Would it be all right if I used your mobile phone?

5 Complete the gaps with the verbs in brackets to form correct conditional sentences (the Zero Conditional, the First Conditional or the Second Conditional).
1. If you ______________ (not be) careful, you'll burn yourself.
2. Would you go to the headmaster if they ______________ (start) bullying you again?
3. I ______________ (not lend) him any money even if I had some.
4. If she ______________ (have) a choice, she always chooses ice cream for pudding.
5. I would be so happy if he ______________ (ask) me out.
6. If you heat ice, it ______________ (turn) to water.
7. What will you do if she ______________ (decide) not to come after all?
8. It's very simple, kids: if you ______________ (not behave) properly, you don't get your treat.
9. Would you know what to do if you ______________ (lose) your passport on holiday abroad?
10. If Tom invites me to his party, I ______________ (not accept) his invitation.

6 Read the situations and form correct conditional sentences (use the First Conditional or the Second Conditional).
1. Steven is not tall, so he doesn't play basketball well. If Steven was / were taller, he would play basketball well.
2. We might have some more sweets. If so, we want to share them among the kids.
3. Sarah wants to ask her boss for a pay rise, but she's worried about making him angry.
4. I'm upset because I have to help my mother with the housework and I can't go to the cinema with my friends.
5. I think you should call a taxi now. The alternative is to walk there.
6. I don't think Southampton FC will win this match. The winner gets promoted to the Premiership.
7 Complete the gaps with the correct forms of the verbs in brackets. Then answer the questions using conditional sentences (the Zero Conditional, the First Conditional or the Second Conditional).

1 What would you do if you found (find) a lot of money in the street?
   [If I found a lot of money in the street, I would go on a long holiday.]

2 What will you talk about if your English teacher asks you to prepare a presentation?
   [I would talk about my last holiday.]  

3 What would happen if there are no grades at school?
   [I would be very happy.]  

4 What do you usually do if you get very angry?
   [I usually count to ten.]  

5 What will you do if it rains all day on Saturday?
   [I will stay at home.]  

6 What would you do if you see someone stealing something in the supermarket?
   [I would call the police.]  

7 What do you do if you have problems falling asleep?
   [I read a book.]  

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8 EXAM PRACTICE

8 Read the email below and complete the gaps with the correct form of the verb in brackets.

Hi Bridget,

That’s good news about this good looking guy, but do you really want to go? If I were (be) you,
I’d (not accept) the invitation. It’s just too risky. If you go (go) to a disco with strangers, anything can happen. You simply don’t do things like that.
And what (you/do) if you want to go back home and he and his friends feel (feel) like dancing all night? How are you going to get home on your own?

You do (do) what you want, of course. But it’s always better to be safe than sorry so just to be on the safe side I take (take) a mobile phone and some money for a taxi.

Sorry if I sound like your Mum :-)

Take care,

Klara

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9 Look at the exam task below. Match points a-c to the proper sections of the email above.

While you were in Ireland last summer you met Bridget and since then you have become really good friends. Bridget has recently visited you and you have just received an email from her in which she wrote:

Thanks again for a wonderful time in your city. I loved it! Guess what happened yesterday on the plane home! I met the most good looking and intelligent guy. And we’re going to the disco with his friends on Saturday! I’ll keep you posted.

Write her an email in which you:
- express your surprise that Bridget wants to go out with complete strangers
- speculate what could happen
- make some suggestions

Begin your email like this: Hi Bridget,