Zero Conditional

When we are thinking about **facts** which are generally **true**, we use:

If + Present Simple, Present Simple

- If you put water in the freezer, it becomes ice.
- If you stand in the rain, you get wet.
- If you heat ice, it melts.

You can see in the examples about the condition always has the same result.

Notice how we use a comma after the first present simple tense clause.

We can also reverse the order and use:

Present Simple + If + Present Simple

- You get wet if you stand in the rain.
- Ice melts if you heat it.
- I can't sleep if I drink coffee at night.
- Plants die if you don't water them.

Notice how the comma is not necessary with this word order.

First Conditional

When we are thinking about a **possible situation in the future**, we use:

If + Present verb, future verb

This structure is common when talking about **possible plans, promises, warnings, threats** or **for persuading someone**. We are predicting a likely result in the future if a condition is fulfilled.

If + Simple Present, Will / Won't ...

- If I go to Paris next month for work, I'll visit the Eiffel Tower (Plans)
- If I have time, I will help you. (Promise)
- If you touch that wire, you will get an electric shock. (Warning)
- If you eat my chocolate that is in the fridge, you'll sleep outside with the dog.(Threat)
- If you take me to the mall, I'll buy you an ice cream. (Persuasion)
- If she doesn't go to university, her parents won't be happy.
- If it rains, we will cancel the trip.
- If that candidate becomes President, the country will be in trouble.
- If I win the competition, I will donate half of the prize money to charity.

Notice how we use a comma after the present tense clause.

We can also reverse the order and use:

Future Verb + If + Present Simple

- I will be annoyed if they don't arrive on time.
- You will get a better job if you can speak English.
- You will miss the bus if you don't hurry.
- The dog will bite you if you pull its tail.
- Your boss will be angry if you don't finish the job.
- What will you do if they fire you?
- You will feel better if you take this medicine.

Notice how the comma is not necessary with this word order.

Modal Verbs in First Conditional

Normally WILL is used in the main clause of first conditional sentences. However you can also use the modal verbs MAY, MIGHT and COULD when something is a possible consequence (and not a certain one) in the future.

- If you are nice to me, I **may** buy you a gift when I'm in Peru.
- If they train a little harder, they **might** win the match.
- If he doesn't do his work, he **could** get fired.

Second Conditional

When we are thinking about a situation in the present or future that is **hypothetical, unlikely or impossible**, we use:

If + Past Simple, ...Would + Verb (I)

We use a past verb though are imagining the present or the future to be different.

The second clause of *subject* + *would* + *verb* (conditional verb) is conditional to the first clause happening (or will only happen if the first part/clause happens).

Example: If I **won** the lottery, I **would travel** around the world.

= It is **unlikely** that I will win the lottery, but I'm going to hypothetically imagine that I did win. In that situation I would travel around the world. So in order for me to travel around the world, I would need the first clause (the condition or situation) to happen, that is, for me to win the lottery first.

- If I won the lottery, I would travel around the world. (Though I am unlikely to win the lottery)
- If I knew his name, I would tell you.
- If I didn't have a headache, I would go to the party.
- If I became President, I would reduce the salaries of all politicians. (Though it is unlikely I will become President)

Notice how we use a comma after the past tense clause.

We can also reverse the order and use:

Conditional verb (would + verb) + If + Past Simple

- I would be happy if I had more free time.
- I would tell you the answer if I knew what it was.
- There would be fewer accidents if everyone drove more carefully.
- We would have a lot of money if we sold our house.
- Would she come if I paid for her flight?
- Would you accept the job if they offered it to you?
- What would you do if you won the lottery?
- What would you do if you saw a U.F.O?

Notice how the comma is not necessary with this word order.

If I were ...

Note that with the verb **To Be** we use IF + I / HE / SHE / IT + **WERE**

The reason we use WERE instead of WAS is because the sentence is in the Subjunctive mood.

- If I were not in debt, I would quit my job.
- If he were taller, he'd be accepted into the team.
- She would be still be correcting my grammar if she were still alive.

Though in informal English, you will hear some people say *If I was... If he was...* etc. This usage doesn't sound good though unfortunately is common.

If I were you

If I were you ... is used when giving **ADVICE** about what you would do in the same situation as the other person. You imagine yourself in their position or situation and what you would do or how you would react.

- If I were you, I would study more.
- If I were you, I would stop doing that.
- If I were you, I would go to the doctor.
- if I were you, I would subscribe to the Woodward English YouTube channel right now. :)
- If I were you, I wouldn't play with those wires.

Though in informal (and grammatically incorrect) English, you may hear some people say *If I was...* This usage doesn't sound good, so avoid it.

You can also change the order of the sentence

- I would study more if I were you.
- I would be more careful if I were you.
- I wouldn't do that if I were you.

Notice how the comma is not necessary with this word order.

Why do you use *IF I WERE* and not *IF I WAS?*

The reason we use WERE instead of WAS is because the sentence is in the SUBJUNCTIVE mood which is used for hypothetical situations. This is a condition which is contrary to fact or reality (the fact is, I am NOT you).

In the subjunctive mood we use IF + I / HE / SHE / IT + **WERE** for the verb **To Be**.

- **If I were** not in debt, I would quit my job. (But the contrary is true, I AM in debt, so I cannot quit my job)
- **If he were** taller, he'd be accepted into the team.
- She would be still be correcting my grammar **if she were** still alive.

In informal English, you will hear some people say *If I was... If he was...* etc. Again, this usage doesn't sound good though unfortunately it is common, especially on the internet (and social media sites).

Could in Second Conditional sentences

COULD can be used instead of WOULD to make the hypothetical present or future more likely.

- If he trained every day, he could represent his country
- If I had a little more money, I could buy a car.