

If + past, would + infinitive (second conditional) – A2

Main theme addressed	In this lesson, you will learn how to use the if + present, will + infinitive construction or first conditional.
Key Goals	<p>Here is an outline of what you will learn today:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How to form if + past, would + infinitive (second conditional) in various syntactic contexts 2. How to recognize different contexts where the second conditional is used 3. Use the second conditional

1. How to form 'if + past, would + infinitive (second conditional) in various syntactic contexts

In second conditional sentences, the structure is usually:

if + past simple, ...would + infinitive

In formal or written language, we can use 'were' instead of 'was' with 'I' and 'he/she/it'.

Examples:

If I **was/were** rich, I **would buy** a house.

If I **lived** in Spain, I **wouldn't be** cold.

2. How to recognize different contexts where the second conditional is used?

The second conditional has two uses.

a) We can use it to talk about things in the **future** that are **imaginary** and that are probably **not going to come true**.

It might be something you are dreaming about.

Examples:

If I was rich, I would travel around the world.

If I met the president, I would say hello.

If I lost my keys, I would be in trouble.

If I missed his birthday, my best friend would be very angry.

b) We can use it to talk about something in the **present** which is **impossible**, because it's **not true**.

Examples:

If I had his number, I would call him.

If I was president, I would lower the taxes.

How does it differ from the first conditional?

The action expressed in the second conditional is a lot less likely to happen than the first conditional.

Examples:

Second conditional: If I had a lot of money, I would buy a huge house with a swimming pool. (a very unlikely scenario)

First conditional: If I have enough money next week, I will buy a new coat. (a more likely scenario)

Exercise:

Fill the gap in the following sentences with the correct alternative.

1. If I was taller, I _____ wear high heels.
- would have to / wouldn't have to / won't have to
2. If you bought a new car, you _____ travel so much.
- wouldn't be able to / would be able to / won't be able to
3. If you knew the answer, you _____ ask.
- would have to / will have to / wouldn't have to
4. If you wanted to travel around the world, you _____ a lot of money.
- wouldn't need / would need / will need

Answers:

1. wouldn't have to
2. wouldn't be able to
3. wouldn't have to
4. would need

3. Use the second conditional

Now you are ready to try formulating the second conditional yourself. Have a look at the following exercises. Enjoy!

Exercise:

Complete the sentence with the appropriate form of second conditional.

1. If you were the president, what _____ (you/do)?
2. If Mike _____ a millionaire, he would give all his money to charity.
3. If we were old, we _____ (not/be able to run) so fast.
4. I _____ (move) to the Caribbean if I my whole family didn't live in Europe.
5. I _____ (like) to live in Australia if it wasn't so far away.
6. If I _____ children, I wouldn't have any free time.
7. If he _____ (get up) up earlier, he'd get to work on time.
8. Your parents _____ (be) a lot happier if you called them every week.
9. If I were you, I _____ (not/worry) about money so much.

Answers:

1. would you do
2. was
3. wouldn't be able to run
4. would move
5. would like

6. had
7. got up
8. would be
9. wouldn't worry

Exercise:

Complete the sentences with the appropriate form of second conditional.

1. _____ (you/buy) a sports car if you had the money?
2. If you ask me, I _____ (not/go) to this restaurant, the food is awful.
3. If we _____ (have) enough money, we would stay in a nice hotel.
4. If I lived in France, I _____ (have to/learn) French well.
5. If you _____ (not/live) so far away, I would visit you more often.
6. If he didn't give me a present on my birthday, I _____ (be) very angry.
7. If I lost my job, I _____ (not/be able to) pay my mortgage.
8. If you moved to Spain, I _____ (come) with you!
9. If you didn't take the job, you _____ (regret) it later on.

Answers:

1. Would you buy
2. wouldn't go
3. had
4. would have to learn
5. didn't live
6. would be
7. wouldn't be able to
8. would come
9. would regret

Exercise:

Complete the sentence with the appropriate form of second conditional.

1. It _____ (be) nice if it _____ (not/snow).
2. If Mary _____ (be) there, she _____ (prepare) a nice meal.
3. I _____ (worry) about my rent so much if I _____ (have) more money.
4. If you _____ (tell) me the truth, I _____ (not/be) so upset.
5. If I _____ (speak) perfect English, I _____ (have) a better job.
6. I _____ (become) rich and famous if I _____ (marry) a film star.

Answers:

1. would be, didn't
2. was, would prepare
3. wouldn't worry, had
4. told, wouldn't be
5. spoke, would have
6. would become, married

Learn More:

<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/second-conditional.html>

<https://www.grammar.cl/english/second-conditional.htm>

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/grammar/intermediate-to-upper-intermediate/conditionals-1>