

CONDITIONAL

The conditional is very common in both speech and writing. There are four main categories of conditional forms. Their names, uses and forms are described in the table below.

Name	Use	Form
Zero	Something is a fact. There is no doubt at all that it will happen.	If + present simple + present simple
First	Something happens if the condition is met. The possibility of the condition being met is quite high.	If + present simple + future simple
Second	Something happens if the condition is met. The possibility of the condition being met is quite low. Known as the 'dreaming' or 'imagining' condition.	If + past simple + would
Third	Something happens if the condition is met but the condition can never be met as we are talking about past time. Known as the impossible condition.	If + past perfect + would have + past participle

Examples are as follows:

- Zero: If I press this button the machine starts.
- First: If it rains I'll take an umbrella.
- Second: If I were rich I'd buy a yacht.
- Third: If I had sold my house last year, I would have made a profit.

Activity 1: Find examples of the conditional. Have a look at the reading text below and make a note of all the conditional forms you can find.

During our lives we often decide to change lifestyles. If we get married, this inevitably leads to one type of change, and if we then have children, our lifestyles change dramatically. I moved from the UK to Australia ten years ago. I know that if I had stayed in the UK my life would have been very different. Ten years ago I had my own company, which I wouldn't have sold, and a house in London, which I wouldn't have sold either. But if someone offered me the chance to go back in time, I wouldn't take it. I'm much happier now than I was ten years ago.

Activity 2: Complete the blanks. Change the words in brackets in the sentences below with the correct form of the verb.

1. If the phone (ring), it will (be probably) John with a message. (It is quite probable that the phone will ring).
2. If John's wife (have) the baby this week, John (go) to the hospital instead of coming to work. (John's wife is 9 months' pregnant, and the baby is due now)
3. If John's wife (have) the baby last week, John (be) very relieved. (But she didn't).
4. I'm glad I don't have any children. If I (have) a child, I (have to work) even harder than I do now to earn enough money for the family.
5. I would like to be rich. If I (be) rich, I (buy) a big house in the country and give up work.
6. Unfortunately, I didn't go to university when I had the chance. If I (go) to university, I (be able) to find a better job than the one I have now.

Activity 3: Write a paragraph using the conditional forms. Now you should write a paragraph using as many of the different conditional forms as you can. The topic of the paragraph should be about your own lifestyle. Describe whether it has changed, if you would like it to change, and how you might have changed certain actions in the past.