

Conditional Sentences

IF Clause Type 1

[Language Guide German + Dictionary for iPhone and iPod-Touch](#) (made by ego4u)

Form

if + Simple Present, will-Future

Example: If I find her address, I will send her an invitation.

The main clause can also be at the beginning of the sentence. In this case, don't use a comma.

Example: I will send her an invitation if I find her address.

Note: Main clause and / or if clause might be negative. See [Simple Present](#) und [will-Future](#) on how to form negative sentences.

Example: If I don't see him this afternoon, I will phone him in the evening.

Use

Conditional Sentences Type I refer to the future. An action in the future will only happen if a certain condition is fulfilled by that time. We don't know for sure whether the condition actually will be fulfilled or not, but the conditions seems rather realistic – so we think it is likely to happen.

Example: If I find her address, I'll send her an invitation.

I want to send an invitation to a friend. I just have to find her address. I am quite sure, however, that I will find it.

Example: If John has the money, he will buy a Ferrari.

I know John very well and I know that he earns a lot of money and that he loves Ferraris. So I think it is very likely that sooner or later he will have the money to buy a Ferrari.

IF Clause Type 2

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Form

if + Simple Past, main clause with Conditional I (= would + Infinitive)

Example: If I found her address, I would send her an invitation.

The main clause can also be at the beginning of the sentence. In this case, don't use a comma.

Example: I would send her an invitation if I found her address.

Note: Main clause and / or if clause might be negative. See [Simple Past](#) und [Conditional I](#) on how to form negative sentences.

Example: If I had a lot of money, I wouldn't stay here.

Were instead of Was

In IF Clauses Type II, we usually use 'were' – even if the pronoun is *I*, *he*, *she* or *it* –.

Example: If I **were** you, I would not do this.

Use

Conditional Sentences Type II refer to situations in the present. An action could happen if the present situation were different. I don't really expect the situation to change, however. I just imagine „*what would happen if ...*“

Example: If I found her address, I would send her an invitation.

I would like to send an invitation to a friend. I have looked everywhere for her address, but I cannot find it. So now I think it is rather unlikely that I will eventually find her address.

Example: If John had the money, he would buy a Ferrari.

I know John very well and I know that he doesn't have much money, but he loves Ferraris. He would like to own a Ferrari (in his dreams). But I think it is very unlikely that he will have the money to buy one in the near future.

IF Clause Type 3

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Form

if + Past Perfect, main clause with Conditional II

Example: If I had found her address, I would have sent her an invitation.

The main clause can also be at the beginning of the sentence. In this case, don't use a comma.

Example: I would have sent her an invitation if I had found her address.

Note: Main clause and / or if clause might be negative. See [Past Perfect](#) and [Conditional II](#) on how to form negative sentences.

Example: If I hadn't studied, I wouldn't have passed my exams.

Use

Conditional Sentences Type III refer to situations in the past. An action could have happened in the past if a certain condition had been fulfilled. Things were different then, however. We just imagine, what would have happened if the situation had been fulfilled.

Example: If I had found her address, I would have sent her an invitation.

Sometime in the past, I wanted to send an invitation to a friend. I didn't find her address, however. So in the end I didn't send her an invitation.

Example: If John had had the money, he would have bought a Ferrari.

I knew John very well and I know that he never had much money, but he loved Ferraris. He would have loved to own a Ferrari, but he never had the money to buy one.

Exceptions for Conditional Sentences

So far you have only learned the basic rules for Conditional Sentences. It depends on the context, however, which tense to use. So sometimes it's possible for example that in an IF Clause Type I another tense than [Simple Present](#) is used, e.g. [Present Progressive](#) or [Present Perfect](#).

Conditional Sentences Type I (likely)

Condition refers to:	IF Clause		Main Clause	
<i>future action</i>	Simple Present	If the book is interesting, ...	Future I	...I will buy it.
			Imperative	...buy it.
			Modal Auxiliary	...you can buy it.
<i>action going on now</i>	Present Progressive	If he is snoring, ...	Future I	...I will wake him up.
			Imperative	...wake him up.
			Modal Auxiliary	...you can wake him up.
<i>finished action</i>	Present Perfect	If he has moved into his new flat, ...	Future I	...we will visit him.
			Imperative	...visit him.
			Modal Auxiliary	...we can visit him.
<i>improbable action</i>	should + Infinitive	If she should win this race, ...	Future I	...I will congratulate her.
			Imperative	...congratulate her.
			Modal Auxiliary	...we can congratulate her.
<i>present facts</i>	Simple Present	If he gets what he wants, ...	Simple Present	...he is very nice.

Conditional Sentences Type II (unlikely)

Condition refers to:	IF Clause		Main Clause	
<i>present / future event</i>	Simple Past	If I had a lot of money, ...	Conditional I	...I would travel around the world.

Condition refers to:	IF Clause		Main Clause	
<i>consequence in the past</i>	Simple Past	If I knew him, ...	Conditional II	...I would have said hello.

Conditional Sentences Type II (impossible)

Condition refers to:	IF Clause		Main Clause	
<i>present</i>	Past Perfect	If I had known it, ...	Conditional I	...I would not be here now.
<i>past</i>	Past Perfect	If he had learned for the test, ...	Conditional II	...he would not have failed it.