

IF Conditional

Zero and First Type

What is a conditional?

A **conditional** is a type of sentence that has two parts: the **IF CLAUSE** and the **MAIN CLAUSE**. You can also call these two parts the **CONDITION** and **RESULT**.

IF CLAUSE = CONDITION

MAIN CLAUSE = RESULT

The **IF CLAUSE** can come first or second in the sentence.

BE CAREFUL!

If you start a sentence with the **IF CLAUSE**, you **need to use a comma** between the clauses.

If it rains, we won't play tennis.

IF CLAUSE = if it rains

MAIN CLAUSE = we won't play tennis

However, you **don't need to use a comma** if the sentence does not start with the **If clause**.

We won't play tennis if it rains

Zero conditional

Form: The zero conditional uses **if/when + present simple**, and **present simple**:

If / When you heat water to 100°C, it boils.

Meaning and use

- We use the zero conditional to talk about things which always happen if a particular action takes place. These can be **scientific facts**, or **things we believe are always true**.

When it rains, the ground gets wet.
If you drink a lot of fizzy drinks, your teeth get damaged.
I get a stomachache if I eat too much cake.

Note:

You can use **if** or **when** and the meaning doesn't change

- **When you take** exercise, **your heart beats** faster.
If you take exercise, **your heart beats** faster.
- **When I drink** milk, **I get** stomach ache.
If I drink milk, **I get** stomach ache

First Conditional

Form: If + subject + **present simple**, subject + **will** + **infinitive**

If I **study** a lot for the exam, I **will pass**.

Meaning and Use:

Possibilities

We use the first conditional to talk about things which might happen if an action takes place.

We use **if** for things which are likely to happen and **when** for things which are certain to happen.

If I see Freddy later, **I'll give** him the book. (I'm not certain I'll see him.)

When I see Freddy later, **I'll give** him the book. (I'm certain I'll see him.)

If we go to the beach, **I'll take** my swimsuit. (It isn't certain we'll go to the beach.)

When we go to the beach, **I'll take** my swimsuit. (It is certain we'll go to the beach.)

Changes in meaning

Be careful! Sometimes you can use the zero or first conditional and both sentences sound acceptable and are grammatically correct. But which conditional form you use changes the meaning of the sentence and the context you're using it in. Take a look at the two examples in the picture.

If you sit in the sun too long, you **get** burned. (Zero conditional)

If you sit in the sun too long, you **will get** burned. (First conditional)

In this case, it is important to think about what you are trying to say. Is it something that is generally true - like the zero conditional sentence? Or is it something that is the result of an action or situation - like the first conditional sentence? Here is an explanation.

If you sit in the sun too long, you **get** burned. (This is something that is generally true - too much sun gives people sunburn.)

If you sit in the sun too long, you **will get** burned. (This is the possible result of an action - like you are giving a friend some advice about being in the sun too long.)