

## Level # 3

# Conditionals

There are several structures in English that are called conditionals.

"Condition" means "situation or circumstance". If a particular condition is true, then a particular result happens.

- If  $y = 10$  then  $2y = 20$
- If  $y = 3$  then  $2y = 6$

There are three basic conditionals that we use very often. There are some more conditionals that we do not use so often.

In this lesson, we will look at the three basic conditionals as well as the so-called zero conditional.

## Structure of Conditional Sentences

The structure of most conditionals is very simple. There are two basic possibilities. Of course, we add many words and can use various tenses, but the basic structure is usually like this:

### **IF condition result**

IF  $y = 10$   $2y = 20$

or like this:

### **result IF condition**

$2y = 20$  IF  $y = 10$

## **First Conditional: real possibility**

We are talking about the future. We are thinking about a particular condition or situation in the future, and the result of this condition. There is a real possibility that this condition will happen. For example, it is morning. You are at home. You plan to play tennis this afternoon. But there are some clouds in the sky. Imagine that it rains. What will you do?

### **IF condition result**

#### **present simple + WILL + base verb**

If it rains I will stay at home.

Notice that we are thinking about a future condition. It is not raining yet. But the sky is cloudy and you think that it could rain. We use the present simple tense to talk about the possible future condition. We use WILL + base verb to talk about the possible future result. The important thing about the first conditional is that there is a real possibility that the condition will happen. Here are some more examples (do you remember the two basic structures: [IF condition result] and [result IF condition]?):

### **IF + condition (present simple) + result (WILL + base verb )**

If I see Mary I will tell her.  
If Tara is free tomorrow he will invite her.  
If they do not pass their exam their teacher will be sad.  
If it rains tomorrow will you stay at home?  
If it rains tomorrow what will you do?

OR

### **result (WILL + base verb) + IF + condition (present simple )**

I will tell Mary if I see her.  
He will invite Tara if she is free tomorrow.  
Their teacher will be sad if they do not pass their exam.  
Will you stay at home if it rains tomorrow?  
What will you do if it rains tomorrow?

## **Second Conditional: unreal possibility or dream**

The second conditional is like the first conditional. We are still thinking about the future. We

are thinking about a particular condition in the future, and the result of this condition. But there is not a real possibility that this condition will happen. For example, you do not have a lottery ticket. Is it possible to win? No! No lottery ticket, no win! But maybe you will buy a lottery ticket in the future. So you can think about winning in the future, like a dream. It's not very real, but it's still possible.

**IF + condition (past simple) + result (WOULD + base verb)**

If I won the lottery I would buy a car.

OR

**result (WOULD + base verb) + IF + condition (past simple)**

I would be happy if I married Mary.

Notice that we are thinking about a future condition. We use the past simple tense to talk about the future condition. We use WOULD + base verb to talk about the future result. The important thing about the second conditional is that there is an unreal possibility that the condition will happen.

Here are some more examples:

If I married Mary I would be happy.  
If Ram became rich she would marry him.  
If it snowed next July would you be surprised?  
If it snowed next July what would you do?

OR

She would marry Ram if he became rich.  
Would you be surprised if it snowed next July?  
What would you do if it snowed next July?

Quote:

Sometimes, we use should, could or might instead of would, for example: If I won a million dollars, I could stop working.

**Third Conditional :no possibility**

The first conditional and second conditionals talk about the future. With the third conditional we talk about the past. We talk about a condition in the past that did not happen. That is why there is no possibility for this condition. The third conditional is also like a dream, but with no possibility of the dream coming true.

Last week you bought a lottery ticket. But you did not win. :-(

Quote:

condition (Past Perfect) + result (WOULD HAVE + Past Participle)

If I had won the lottery I would have bought a car.

Notice that we are thinking about an impossible past condition. You did not win the lottery. So the condition was not true, and that particular condition can never be true because it is finished. We use the past perfect tense to talk about the impossible past condition. We use WOULD HAVE + past participle to talk about the impossible past result. The important thing about the third conditional is that both the condition and result are impossible now.

Sometimes, we use *should have, could have, might have* instead of *would have*, for example: *If you had bought a lottery ticket, you might have won.*

### Examples :

If I had seen Mary I would have told her.

If Tara had been free yesterday I would have invited her.

If they had not passed their exam their teacher would have been sad.

If it had rained yesterday would you have stayed at home?

If it had rained yesterday what would you have done?

OR

I would have told Mary if I had seen her.

I would have invited Tara if she had been free yesterday.

Their teacher would have been sad if they had not passed their exam.

Would you have stayed at home if it had rained yesterday?

What would you have done if it had rained yesterday?

## **Zero Conditional: certainty**

We use the so-called zero conditional when the result of the condition is always true, like a scientific fact.

Take some ice. Put it in a saucepan. Heat the saucepan. What happens? The ice melts (it becomes water). You would be surprised if it did not.

Quote:

IF + condition (present simple) + result (present simple)

If I miss the 8 o'clock bus I am late for work.  
If I am late for work my boss gets angry.  
If people don't eat they get hungry.  
If you heat ice does it melt?

OR

I am late for work if I miss the 8 o'clock bus.  
My boss gets angry if I am late for work.  
People get hungry if they don't eat.  
Does ice melt if you heat it?

## **Questions**

What is a question?

A statement is a sentence that gives information. A question is a sentence that asks for information.

Quote:

Statement: I like CSS Forum.  
Question: Do you like CSS Forum ?

A written question in English always ends with a question mark: ?

## **Basic Question Structure**

Quote:

The basic structure of a question in English is very simple:

auxiliary verb + subject + main verb

### **Examples:**

Do you like Mary?

Are they playing football?

Will Anthony go to Tokyo?

Have you seen ET?

### **Exception!**

For the verb be in simple present and simple past, we do not use an auxiliary verb. We simply reverse the positions of be and subject:

Quote:

Statement: He is German.

Question: Is he German?

## **Basic Question Types**

There are 3 basic types of question:

1. Yes/No Questions (the answer to the question is "Yes" or "No")
2. Question Word Questions (the answer to the question is "Information")
3. Choice Questions (the answer to the question is "in the question")

### **1. Yes/No Questions**

Q. Do you want dinner?

A. Yes, I do.

Q. Can you drive?

A. No, I can't.

Q. Has she finished her work?

A. Yes, she has.

Q. Did they go home?  
A. No, they didn't.

**Exception!** verb be simple present and simple past

Q. Is Anne French?  
A. Yes, she is.

Q. Was Ram at home?  
A. No, he wasn't.

## **2. Question Word Questions**

Q. Where do you live?  
A. In Paris.

Q. When will we have lunch?  
A. At 1pm.

Q. Who did she meet?  
A. She met Ram.

Q. Why hasn't Tara done it?  
A. Because she can't.

**Exception!** verb be simple present and simple past

Q. Where is Bombay?  
A. In India.

Q. How was she?  
A. Very well.

## **3. Choice Questions**

Q. Do you want tea or coffee?  
Coffee, please.

Q. Will we meet John or James?

John.

Q. Did she go to London or New York?  
She went to London.

**Exception!** verb be simple present and simple past

Q. Is your car white or black?  
It's black.

Q. Were they \$15 or \$50?  
\$15.

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## Tag Questions

**You speak English, don't you?**

A tag question is a special construction in English. It is a statement followed by a mini-question. The whole sentence is a "tag question", and the mini-question at the end is called a "question tag".

We use tag questions at the end of statements to ask for confirmation. They mean something like: "Am I right?" or "Do you agree?" They are very common in English.

The basic structure is:

Quote:

+Positive statement, -negative tag?

Example : Snow is white, isn't it?

-Negative statement, +positive tag?

Example : You don't like me, do you?

**Look at these examples with positive statements:**

You are coming, are n't you?

We have finished, have n't we?

You do like coffee, do n't you?

You like coffee, do n't you? ----- You (do) like...

They will help, wo n't they? ----- won't = will not

I can come, can 't I?

We must go, must n't we?



He should try harder, should n't he?  
You are English, are n't you? (no auxiliary for main verb be present & past)  
John was there, was n't he? (no auxiliary for main verb be present & past)

**Look at these examples with negative statements:**

It is n't raining, is it?  
We have never seen that, have we?  
You do n't like coffee, do you?  
They will not help, will they?  
They wo n't report us, will they?  
I can never do it right, can I?  
We must n't tell her, must we?  
He should n't drive so fast, should he?  
You are n't English, are you?  
John was not there, was he?

**Some special cases:**

I am right, aren't I? aren't I ----- (not amn't I)  
You have to go, don't you? ----- you (do) have to go...  
I have been answering, haven't I? ----- use first auxiliary  
Nothing came in the post, did it? ----- treat statements with nothing, nobody etc like negative statements  
Let's go, shall we? ----- let's = let us  
He'd better do it, hadn't he? ----- he had better (no auxiliary)

**Here are some mixed examples:**

But you don't really love her, do you?  
This will work, won't it?  
Well, I couldn't help it, could I?  
But you'll tell me if she calls, won't you?  
We'd never have known, would we?  
The weather's bad, isn't it?  
You won't be late, will you?  
Nobody knows, do they?

Notice that we often use tag questions to ask for information or help, starting with a

negative statement. This is quite a friendly/polite way of making a request. For example, instead of saying "Where is the police station?" (not very polite), or "Do you know where the police station is?" (slightly more polite), we could say: "You wouldn't know where the police station is, would you?" Here are some more examples:

You don't know of any good jobs, do you?  
You couldn't help me with my homework, could you?  
You haven't got \$10 to lend me, have you?

### **Intonation**

We can change the meaning of a tag question with the musical pitch of our voice. With rising intonation, it sounds like a real question. But if our intonation falls, it sounds more like a statement that doesn't require a real answer:

You don't know where my wallet is, do you? / rising real question  
It's a beautiful view, isn't it? \ falling not a real question

### **Answers to tag questions**

How do we answer a tag question? Often, we just say Yes or No. Sometimes we may repeat the tag and reverse it (... , do they? Yes, they do). Be very careful about answering tag questions. In some languages, an opposite system of answering is used, and non-native English speakers sometimes answer in the wrong way. This can lead to a lot of confusion!

Quote:

Answer a tag question according to the truth of the situation. Your answer reflects the real facts, not (necessarily) the question.

For example, everyone knows that snow is white. Look at these questions, and the correct answers:

Snow is white, isn't it? Yes (it is).  
Snow isn't white, is it? Yes it is!

The answer is the same in both cases - because snow IS WHITE!

Snow is black, isn't it?  
Snow isn't black, is it? No (it isn't).

No it isn't! the answer is the same in both cases - because snow IS NOT BLACK!

**but notice the change of stress when the answerer does not agree with the questioner**

In some languages, people answer a question like "Snow isn't black, is it?" with "Yes" (meaning "Yes, I agree with you"). This is the wrong answer in English!

**Here are some more examples, with correct answers:**

The moon goes round the earth, doesn't it? Yes, it does.  
The earth is bigger than the moon, isn't it? Yes.  
The earth is bigger than the sun, isn't it? No, it isn't!  
Asian people don't like rice, do they? Yes, they do!  
Elephants live in Europe, don't they? No, they don't!  
Men don't have babies, do they? No.  
The English alphabet doesn't have 40 letters, does it? No, it doesn't.

### **Question tags with imperatives**

Sometimes we use question tags with imperatives (invitations, orders), but the sentence remains an imperative and does not require a direct answer. We use won't for invitations. We use can, can't, will, would for orders.

#### **invitation:**

Take a seat, won't you? -----polite  
order Help me, can you? -----quite friendly  
Help me, can't you? ----- quite friendly (some irritation?)  
Close the door, would you? ----- quite polite  
Do it now, will you? ----- less polite

### **Same-way question tags**

Although the basic structure of tag questions is positive-negative or negative-positive, it is sometime possible to use a positive-positive or negative-negative structure. We use same-way question tags to express interest, surprise, anger etc, and not to make real questions.

So you're having a baby, are you? That's wonderful!  
She wants to marry him, does she? Some chance!  
So you think that's amusing, do you? Think again.

Negative-negative tag questions usually sound rather hostile:

So you don't like my looks, don't you?

Don't forget, will you? with negative imperatives only will is possible.

## Gerunds (-ing)

When a verb ends in -ing, it may be a gerund or a present participle. It is important to understand that they are not the same.

Gerunds are sometimes called "verbal nouns".

When we use a verb in -ing form more like a noun, it is usually a gerund:

- **Fishing** is fun.

When we use a verb in -ing form more like a verb or an adjective, it is usually a present participle:

- Anthony is **fishing**.
- I have a **boring** teacher.

### 1. Gerunds as Subject, Object or Complement

Try to think of gerunds as verbs in noun form.

Like nouns, gerunds can be the subject, object or complement of a sentence:

- **Smoking** costs a lot of money.
- I don't like **writing**.
- My favourite occupation is **reading**.

But, like a verb, a gerund can also have an object itself. In this case, the whole expression [gerund + object] can be the subject, object or complement of the sentence.

- **Smoking** cigarettes costs a lot of money.
- I don't like **writing** letters.
- My favourite occupation is **reading** detective stories.

Like nouns, we can use gerunds with adjectives (including articles and other determiners):

- pointless **questioning**
- a **settling** of debts
- the **making** of Titanic
- his **drinking** of alcohol

But when we use a gerund with an article, it does not usually take a direct object:

- a settling of debts (not a settling debts)
- Making "Titanic" was expensive.
- The making of "Titanic" was expensive.

Quote:

Do you see the difference in these two sentences? In one, "reading" is a gerund (noun). In the other "reading" is a present participle (verb).

My favourite occupation is reading.  
My favourite niece is reading.

**reading as gerund (noun) Main Verb Complement**

My favourite occupation is reading.  
My favourite occupation is football.

**reading as present participle (verb) Auxiliary Verb Main Verb**

My favourite niece is reading.  
My favourite niece has finished.

## 2. Gerunds after Prepositions

This is a good rule. It has no exceptions!

If we want to use a verb after a preposition, it must be a gerund. It is impossible to use an infinitive after a preposition. **So for example, we say:**

I will call you after arriving at the office.  
Please have a drink before leaving.  
I am looking forward to meeting you.  
Do you object to working late?  
Tara always dreams about going on holiday.

**Notice that you could replace all the above gerunds with "real" nouns:**

I will call you after my arrival at the office.  
Please have a drink before your departure.  
I am looking forward to our lunch.  
Do you object to this job?  
Tara always dreams about holidays.

Quote:

The above rule has no exceptions! So why is "to" followed by "driving" in 1 and by "drive" in 2?

I am used to driving on the left.

I used to drive on the left.

**to as preposition                      Preposition**

I am used to driving on the left.

I am used to animals.

**to as infinitive                      Infinitive**

I used to drive on the left

I used to smoke.

### 3. **Gerunds after Certain Verbs**

We sometimes use one verb after another verb. Often the second verb is in the infinitive form, **for example**:

I want to eat.

**But** sometimes the second verb must be in gerund form, for example:

I dislike eating.

**This depends on the first verb. Here is a list of verbs that are usually followed by a verb in gerund form:**

*admit, appreciate, avoid, carry on, consider, defer, delay, deny, detest, dislike, endure, enjoy, escape, excuse, face, feel like, finish, forgive, give up, can't help, imagine, involve, leave off, mention, mind, miss, postpone, practise, put off, report, resent, risk, can't stand, suggest, understand*

**Look at these examples:**

She is considering having a holiday.

Do you feel like going out?  
I can't help falling in love with you.  
I can't stand not seeing you.

Quote:

Some verbs can be followed by the gerund form or the infinitive form without a big change in meaning: begin, continue, hate, intend, like, love, prefer, propose, start

I like to play tennis.  
I like playing tennis.  
It started to rain.  
It started raining.

#### 4. Gerunds in Passive Sense

We often use a gerund after the verbs need, require and want. In this case, the gerund has a passive sense.

I have three shirts that need **washing**. (need to be washed)  
This letter requires **signing**. (needs to be signed)  
The house wants **repainting**. (needs to be repainted)

Quote:

The expression "something wants doing" is British English