

Beginner

The Use of If I do and If I did

1. Compare these examples:

a. Ota has lost her watch. She tell Ryo:

Ota: I've lost my watch. Have you seen it anywhere?

Ryo: No, but **if I find** it, I'll tell

In this example, Ryo feels there is a real possibility that she will find the watch. So she says: **if I find ... , I'll ...**

b. Maya says:

If **I found** a wallet in the street, I'd take it to the police station.

This is a different type of situation. Here, Maya does not expect to find a wallet in the street; he is imagining a situation that will probably not happen. So he says: **if I found ... , I'd (= I would) ... (not if I find ... , I'll ...)**

When you imagine something like this, you use **if + past (if I found / if there was / if we didn't etc.)**.

But the meaning is *not* past:

Examples:

1. What would you do **if you won** a million pounds?
(we don't really expect this to happen)
2. I don't really want to go to their party, but I probably will go.
They'd be upset **if I didn't** go.
3. **If there was (or were)** an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?

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2. We do not normally use **would** in the **if**-part of the sentence:

Examples:

1. I'd be very frightened **if** somebody **pointed** a gun at me. (*not if somebody would point*)
2. **If I didn't** go to their party, they'd be upset. (*not If I wouldn't go*)

But you can use **if ... would** when you ask somebody to do something:

Example: (*from a formal letter*) I would be grateful **if you would let** me know your decision as soon as possible.

3. In the other part of the sentence (not the **if**-part) we use **would** ('d) / **wouldn't**:

Examples:

1. If you took more exercises, you'd (= you **would**) feel better.
2. I'm not tired. If I went to bed now, **I wouldn't sleep**.
3. **Would** you **mind** if I used your phone?

Could and **might** are also possible:

Examples:

1. If you took more exercise, you **might feel** better. (= it is possible that you would feel better)
2. If it stopped raining, we **could go** out. (= we would be able to go out)

4. Do not use **when** in sentence like those on this page:

Examples:

1. They'd be upset **if** I didn't go to their party. (*not when I didn't go*)
2. What would you do **if** you were bitten by a snake? (*not when you were bitten*)