

A Real conditionals

In real conditionals we usually use a present tense verb in the **if-clause** to talk about the future:

- If you **leave** now, you'll be able to catch the 5 o'clock train. (or If you're **leaving** now ...)

However, in conversation we can use **be going to** instead of a present tense verb:

- If I'm **going to** catch the train, I'll have to leave now.
- We'll need more chairs if we're **going to** invite so many people to the performance.

When we make offers, and give instructions or advice we can use an imperative in the main clause:

- Take** another sandwich if you're hungry.
- If you have a mobile phone, **check** that it is turned off.

B We can use **if-clauses** with a present tense verb to introduce certain conditions under which something is true. In this case, 'if' has a meaning similar to 'when':

- The video pauses **if** you *click* on this button.
- If** age-related changes *are taken* into account, the conclusion remains the same.

C We can talk about possible future events with a present perfect verb in the **if-clause** and a future form (**will**, present continuous, or **be going to**) in the main clause. Sometimes present perfect or present simple can be used with a similar meaning:

- I'll lend you *War and Peace* if I've **finished** it before you go on holiday. (or ... if I **finish** ...)
- If you **haven't paid** the bill by Friday, we're *taking* the carpets back. (or If you **don't pay** ...)

However, to focus on the future consequences of a past event, we use the present perfect. Compare:

- If I've **failed** my exam again, I'm giving up the course. (suggests I have already taken the exam; I don't know the result) *and*
- If I **fail** my exam again, I'm giving up the course. (I may or may not have taken the exam)

D Unreal conditionals

In unreal conditionals we can use **if ... were + to-infinitive** rather than **if + past simple** to talk about imaginary future situations, particularly when it is unlikely that the situation in the **if-clause** will happen (see also Unit 14):

- If the technology **were to become** available, we would be able to expand the business.

However, note that we don't usually use this pattern with verbs such as **belong**, **doubt**, **enjoy**, **know**, **like**, **remember**, and **understand** when they describe a state:

- If I **knew** they were honest, I'd gladly lend them the money. (*not* If I were to know ...)

We sometimes use this pattern to make a suggestion sound more polite:

- Would it be too early for you **if we were to** meet at 5:30?

E We use **if it was not for + noun phrase** (or more formally **if it were not for + noun phrase**) to say that one situation is dependent on another situation or on a person (see also Unit 85A). When we talk about the past we can also use **if it had not been for + noun phrase**:

- If it wasn't / weren't for** *Nina*, the conference wouldn't be going ahead.
- If it hadn't been for** *Dad*, I wouldn't have gone to college. (or **If it wasn't / weren't for** ...)

In formal language we can also use **Were it not for ...** and **Had it not been for ...** (see Unit 84A):

- Were it not for** *Nina* ...
- Had it not been for** *Dad*...

We can use **but for + noun** with a similar meaning, particularly in formal contexts:

- The village school would have been closed years ago **but for** *the determination* of teachers and parents to keep it open. (= ... if it hadn't been for the determination ...)

Exercises

83.1 Complete these sentences with an imperative (1–3) or an if-clause (4–6). A

- 1 There have been a lot of thefts from cars in the city centre. If you leave your car there, make sure it's locked. / don't leave any valuables in it.
- 2 If you have any more problems with the computer,
- 3 If you see Ned today,
- 4
- 5
keep well away from them.
- 6
don't hesitate to get in touch with me again.
- 7
get off at the stop near the library.

83.2 Complete the sentences using the verb pairs from the box. Use the present simple or present perfect in the if-clause, and give alternatives. Notice any differences in meaning. C

not fill in – need	not help – go	leave – meet
not arrive – give	study – know	break – have to

- 1 If you have studied / study *Macbeth*, you'll know the scene with the witches.
- 2 If you home before I get there, I'll you at the airport.
- 3 If you the window, you'll pay for it.
- 4 If the taxi by 10 o'clock, I'll you a lift to the station.
- 5 If you an application form, you will to do so before you can be considered for the job.
- 6 If the antibiotics by the end of the week, I'll back to the doctor.

83.3 If necessary, correct the italicised part of the sentence using a past simple form of the same verb. D

- 1 I'd sell the house immediately if it *were to belong* to me.
- 2 If they *were to hold* an election now, the Democrats would undoubtedly win.
- 3 I'd go back to the restaurant if I *were to like* sushi more.
- 4 If I *were to doubt* his honesty, I wouldn't employ him.
- 5 There would be no cinema in the town if the Odeon *were to close*.
- 6 If I *were to understand* Chinese, I'd do the translation myself.

83.4 Complete these rewritten sentences with similar meanings. E

- 1 The weather was terrible. Otherwise, we would have gone walking this weekend. *If it had ... not been for the terrible weather, we would have gone walking this weekend.*
- 2 His happiness would have been complete except for his anxiety over Carla. *If it were*
- 3 The strike would probably still be going on if the government hadn't intervened. *Were it*
- 4 The fight could have got out of hand if the police hadn't arrived. *Had it*
- 5 Everything was quiet except for the sound of birds singing. *But for*
- 6 There would have been far more wars in the last 50 years without the United Nations. *If it was*
- 7 We would have been here two hours ago except for the roadworks. *If it had*