

A

When the first verb in a conditional **if-clause** is **should**, **were**, or **had** we can leave out **if** and put the verb at the start of the clause (see Units 99 and 100 for more on inversion). We do this particularly in formal or literary English, and only in hypothetical conditionals (a type of unreal conditional which answers the question 'What would happen if ...?'):

- Should** any of this **cost** you anything, send me the bill. (= If any of this **should cost** ...)
- It would be embarrassing, **were** she **to find out** the truth. (= ... if she **were to find out** ...)
- Had** they **not rushed** Jo to hospital, she would have died. (= If they **hadn't rushed** Jo ...)

B

We don't usually use **if ... will** in conditional clauses. However, we can use **if ... will** –

- ☆ when we talk about a *result* of something in the main clause. Compare:
  - Open a window **if it will help** you to sleep. (or ... **if it helps** you to sleep; 'Helping you to sleep' is the result of opening the window) *and*
  - I will be angry **if it turns out** that you are wrong. (*not* ... if it will turn out ...; 'Turning out that you are wrong' is **not** the result of being angry)
- ☆ in requests or with the meaning 'if you are willing to' (or **if ... would** to be more polite):
  - If you will / would** take your seats, ladies and gentlemen, we can begin the meeting.
- ☆ in real conditionals when we want to show that we disapprove of something. In this case, **will** is stressed in speech (see also Unit 16B):
  - A: I'm tired.     B: Well, **if you will** go to bed so late, I'm not surprised.

Note that we can use **if ... won't** when we talk about a refusal to do something:

- There's no point in trying to teach the class **if they won't** pay attention.

C

In a *real* conditional sentence, we use **if ... happen to**, **if ... should**, or **if ... should happen to** to talk about something which may be possible, but is not very likely. **If ... happen to** is most common in spoken English:

- If you happen to** be in our area, drop in and see us. (or **If you should [happen to]** be ...)

Note that we don't usually use this pattern in *unreal* conditionals talking about states or events in the **if-clause** which the speaker perceives as highly unlikely or impossible:

- If the North Sea froze** in winter, you could walk from London to Oslo. (*but probably not* If the North Sea **happened to freeze / should (happen to) freeze** in winter ...)

D

In *comparison clauses* we can use **as if** followed by a **noun phrase**, **-ing clause**, **past participle (-ed)** clause, or **to-infinitive** to introduce a comparison with a situation described in the main clause. We do this to give an explanation or to say that something appears to be the case but is not:

- Magnus walked in **as if nothing** had happened.
- His hands made a circular motion, **as if steering** a bus through a sharp bend.
- When he caught the ball, Lee fell to the floor **as if hit** by a bullet.
- As if to convince** herself that Luis was really there, she gently touched his cheek.

Note that we can use **as though** instead of **as if**, and in informal speech some people use **like** with the same meaning:

- The crowd reacted **as though** they were watching a boxing match. (or ... **as if** ...)
- He walked into the room **like** nothing had happened. (or ... **as if** ...)

## Exercises

## 84.1 Rewrite these sentences with similar meanings. Begin with the word given. (A)

- 1 Consult your doctor again if the symptoms remain 72 hours after starting the course of medicine. *Should...* the symptoms remain 72 hours after starting the course of medicine, consult your doctor again.
- 2 You would know what you have to do for homework, if you had not been absent from school on Friday. *Had...* .....
- 3 Clare would have been able to stay with her friends if they were still living in Brussels. *Were...* .....
- 4 The factory would not have had to shut down if the workers were prepared to accept a wage cut. *Were...* .....
- 5 We shall have to reduce the number of employees if the financial performance of the company doesn't improve in the near future. *Should...* .....
- 6 I might have considered taking the job if the salary had been higher. *Had...* .....

## 84.2 If necessary, correct the italicised parts of these sentences. (B)

- 1 *If I will press this button*, will it start to record?
- 2 You're welcome to borrow my old bike, *if you think it will be of any use to you*.
- 3 *If he won't resign*, the Prime Minister should sack him.
- 4 *If the disease will be untreated*, it can lead to brain damage.
- 5 *If you'll tell me where the vacuum cleaner is*, I'll do some cleaning.
- 6 *If you'll complain about me*, I'll get into trouble with my teacher.
- 7 *If it'll save money*, I'm willing to go by public transport.

84.3 If possible, rewrite the italicised parts of these sentences with **happen to**. If it is unlikely, write **X** after the sentence. (C)

- 1 *If I see Georgia when I'm in Rome*, I'll send her your regards.  
.....
- 2 *If a UFO landed in the centre of New York*, there would be mass panic.  
.....
- 3 The plan for a new airport to be built outside London is bad news *if you live nearby*.  
.....
- 4 *If I was the President*, I would order our nuclear weapons to be destroyed.  
.....
- 5 *If you are in the south of Spain next week*, there is a good chance of seeing a total eclipse of the sun.  
.....

## 84.4 Complete the sentences using your own words or the notes if you prefer. (D)

(agree – everything Julia said)    ~~(I say shocking)~~    (it – reverse – wall)  
(try – imagine – contained)    (overcome – great weariness)

- 1 My father raised his eyebrows as if I *had said something shocking*.
- 2 He folded his arms on the table and laid his head on them, as if ...
- 3 She stared hard at the parcel as if ...
- 4 He nodded his head slowly as if ...
- 5 The back of the car looked as if ...