

If I do . . . and If I did . . .

A

Compare these two examples:

Sue has lost her watch. She thinks it may be at Ann's house.

Sue: I think I left my watch at your house. Have you seen it?

Ann: No, but I'll look when I get home. If I find it, I'll tell you.

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

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

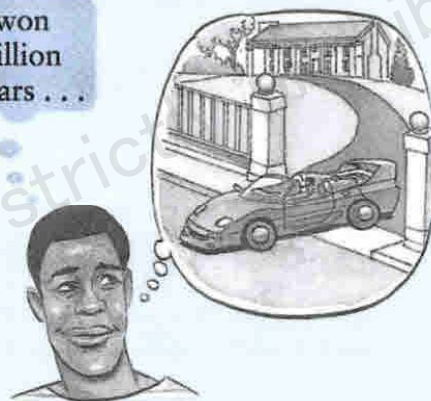
In this example, Carol is not thinking about a real possibility. She is imagining the situation and doesn't expect to find a wallet in the street. So she says: **If I found . . . , I'd (= I would) . . . (not If I find . . . , I'll . . .)**.

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

But the meaning is not past:

- What would you do if you won a million dollars? (We don't really expect this to happen.)
- I don't really want to go to their party, but I probably will go. They'd be hurt if I didn't go.
- Sarah has decided not to apply for the job. She isn't really qualified for it, so she probably wouldn't get it if she applied.

If I won a million dollars . . .



B

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

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

C

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

- If you got more exercise, you'd (= you would) probably feel better.
- **Would you mind** if I used your phone?
- I'm not tired enough to go to bed yet. I **wouldn't sleep** (if I went to bed now).

Could and **might** are also possible:

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

D

Do not use **when** in sentences like those on this page:

- They would be hurt if we didn't accept their invitation. (*not* when we didn't)
- What would you do if you were bitten by a snake? (*not* when you were bitten)

For **if** and **when**, see also Unit 24C.

Exercises

35.1 Put the verb into the correct form.

1. They would be hurt if I didn't go to see them. (not / go)
2. If you got more exercise, you would feel better. (feel)
3. If they offered me the job, I think I _____ it. (take)
4. I'm sure Amy will lend you the money. I'd be very surprised if she _____ .
(refuse)
5. If I sold my car, I _____ much money for it. (not / get)
6. A lot of people would be out of work if the factory _____ .
(close down)
7. (*in an elevator*) What would happen if I _____ that red button?
(press)
8. Liz gave me this ring. She _____ very upset if I lost it. (be)
9. Dave and Kate are expecting us. They would be disappointed if we _____ . (not / come)
10. Would Bob mind if I _____ his book without asking him? (borrow)
11. If somebody _____ in here with a gun, I'd be very scared. (walk)
12. I'm sure Sue _____ if you explained the situation to her.
(understand)

35.2 You ask a friend questions. Use *What would you do if ... ?*

1. (Maybe one day your friend will win a lot of money.)
What would you do if you won a lot of money?
2. (Maybe one day someone will offer your friend a job in Rio de Janeiro.)
What _____ ?
3. (Perhaps one day your friend will lose his / her passport.)

4. (There has never been a fire in the building. Ask your friend "What ... if ... ?")

35.3 Answer the questions in the way shown.

1. A: Should we take the 10:30 train?
B: No. (arrive / too early) If we took the 10:30 train, we'd arrive too early.
2. A: Is Ken going to take the driver's test?
B: No. (fail) If he _____ .
3. A: Why don't we stay in a hotel?
B: No. (cost too much money) _____
4. A: Is Sally going to apply for the job?
B: No. (not / get it) _____
5. A: Let's tell them the truth.
B: No. (not / believe us) _____
6. A: Why don't we invite Bill to the party?
B: No. (have to invite his friends, too) _____

35.4 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences.

1. If you got more exercise, you'd feel better .
2. I'd feel very angry if _____ .
3. If I didn't go to work tomorrow, _____ .
4. Would you go to the party if _____ ?
5. If you bought a car, _____ .
6. Would you mind if _____ ?