

BV

Behind the Verdict

Should prisons rehabilitate or punish? Justice through mixed conditionals

B2

Reading

Grammar

40 min

★ Lesson Objectives

- ★ Read an article debating rehabilitation vs punishment
- ★ Learn vocabulary related to crime, justice and the legal system
- ★ Use mixed conditionals connecting past with present and vice versa
- ★ Distinguish mixed conditionals from standard 2nd and 3rd
- ★ Discuss crime, punishment and the purpose of justice
- ★ Write about hypothetical past-present scenarios

1 Before You Read

- ▶ What is prison's main purpose: to punish, to protect society, or to rehabilitate?
- ▶ Can people who commit crimes genuinely change?
- ▶ If someone stole food because they were starving, should they go to prison?

2 Reading: Lock Them Up or Let Them Learn?

In Oslo, a burglar gets 14 months with TV, desk, and education access. In Texas, a similar offender gets eight years with no heating, no privacy, no programmes. Same crime. Very different futures.

Norway, which prioritises rehabilitation, has ~20% reoffending. The US, focused on punishment, has ~76%. If Norway **hadn't invested** in rehabilitation, its recidivism rate **would probably be** much higher today. If the US system **were** less focused on punishment, fewer people **would have returned** to prison. Advocates of rehabilitation say most offenders are products of poverty and trauma. "If these people **had grown up** in stable homes, many **wouldn't be** in prison today," says Dr. Katarina Lindqvist. Vocational training and therapy give prisoners alternatives. "If a prisoner **hadn't received** job training, they **would have** nothing to fall back on."

Prosecutor Elena Marchetti argues justice needs consequences. "If we **didn't punish** crime, society **would have lost** all sense of right and wrong." She says victims deserve accountability. "If a violent criminal **had been released** early and reoffended, the public **would rightly be** furious."

Germany's hybrid model combines mandatory time with education and mental health treatment. "If the German system **hadn't adopted** this approach, its outcomes **would not be** as strong today," notes criminologist Dr. Tobias Kessler.

If we **treated** the causes of crime — poverty, inequality, mental illness — we **might not have needed** so many prisons in the first place.

3 Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Example
rehabilitate	help return to productive life	<i>Rehabilitate offenders.</i>
criminal justice	system of courts, police, prisons	<i>Studied criminal justice.</i>
reoffending	committing crime again	<i>Reoffending rates vary.</i>
recidivism	tendency to reoffend (formal)	<i>High recidivism.</i>
advocate	person supporting a cause	<i>Advocate for reform.</i>
offender	person who commits a crime	<i>First-time offenders.</i>
trauma	deeply distressing experience	<i>Childhood trauma.</i>
irredeemable	too bad to be improved	<i>No one is irredeemable.</i>
vocational	relating to job skills	<i>Vocational training.</i>
prosecutor	lawyer against accused	<i>Prosecutor demanded sentence.</i>
accountable	responsible for actions	<i>Held accountable.</i>
expense	at the cost of	<i>At the expense of justice.</i>
hybrid	combining two approaches	<i>A hybrid model.</i>
mandatory	required by law	<i>Mandatory minimum.</i>
gradual	happening slowly	<i>Gradual reintegration.</i>
criminologist	expert studying crime	<i>Published new research.</i>

Collocations: commit a crime • serve a sentence • prison reform • reoffending rate • hold accountable • release on parole • mental health support • break the cycle

4 Grammar: Mixed Conditionals

■ In the Text, You Saw...

- Type A (past→present): "If Norway hadn't invested, its rate would be higher today."
- Type A: "If they had grown up in stable homes, they wouldn't be in prison now."
- Type B (present→past): "If the US were less punishment-focused, fewer would have returned."
- Type B: "If we treated causes, we might not have needed so many prisons."

Mixed conditionals cross time zones: connecting past with present, or present with past.

Type	If-clause	Main clause	Example
A: Past→Present	if + had done	would + base	If I had studied law, I would be a lawyer now.
B: Present→Past	if + past simple/were	would have + pp	If I were braver, I would have spoken up.

STANDARD vs MIXED

- 2nd: If I had money, I would travel. (now→now)
- 3rd: If I had saved, I would have travelled. (past→past)
- Mixed A: If I had saved, I would be rich now. (past→now)
- Mixed B: If I were careful, I wouldn't have lost my keys. (now→past)

★ How to Spot Mixed Conditionals

- Look for a time mismatch: if-clause about PAST but result about NOW → Mixed A
- If-clause about permanent character but result about specific PAST event → Mixed B

▲ Common Mistakes

- X "If I had studied, I would have been a lawyer now." → ✓ "...I would be..." (present result)
- X "If I was smarter, I would pass yesterday." → ✓ "...I would have passed..." (past result)

5 Game: Match the Halves

1. If I had studied medicine, → I would be a doctor now. (A: past→present)
2. If she were more confident, → she would have applied. (B: present→past)
3. If he hadn't moved to London, → he wouldn't be working there now. (A)
4. If I were a better cook, → I would have made dinner myself. (B)
5. If they had learned English earlier, → they would have better opportunities now. (A)
6. If she weren't so shy, → she would have spoken in yesterday's meeting. (B)
7. If he had taken the job in 2019, → he would be living in Tokyo now. (A)
8. If I didn't fear flying, → I would have travelled more in my twenties. (B)
9. If we hadn't invested in solar, → our bills would be higher now. (A)
10. If he were more organised, → he wouldn't have missed the deadline. (B)

6 Comprehension Quiz

1. Norway's reoffending rate?

Answer: ~20%

2. What does Dr. Lindqvist say?

Answer: Most offenders are products of poverty and trauma

3. What does Marchetti argue?

Answer: Justice must include consequences

4. Germany's hybrid model combines?

Answer: Strict sentences with structured support

5. 'If I had studied law, I ___ a lawyer now.' (Mixed A)

Answer: would be

6. 'If she were braver, she ___ yesterday.' (Mixed B)

Answer: would have spoken

7. Mixed A connects:

Answer: Past cause → present result

8. Which is Mixed B?

Answer: If I were taller, I would have been picked for the team.

7 Fill in the Blanks

Phrases: would be • weren't • would be living • would have handled • would be • weren't • would have • would have

1. If he had saved money, he ___ rich now. (A)
2. If she ___ so careless, she wouldn't have lost her passport. (B)
3. If I had accepted that job, I ___ in Berlin today. (A)
4. If he were more patient, he ___ it better last week. (B)
5. If they hadn't moved to Canada, they ___ in Portugal now. (A)
6. If I ___ afraid of heights, I would have gone skydiving. (B)
7. If she had studied harder, she ___ a better job now. (A)
8. If we were more adventurous, we ___ tried that restaurant. (B)

● **Answers:** 1. would be • 2. weren't • 3. would be living • 4. would have handled • 5. would be • 6. weren't • 7. would have • 8. would have

8 Speaking & Writing

◆ Discussion Questions

1. If you had been born in a poor area, would your life be different now?
2. Should justice focus more on rehabilitation or punishment?
3. If prisons were comfortable, would that have reduced crime?
4. What would you do if a friend had committed a minor crime?
5. If you were Minister of Justice, what would you change?

◆ Example Dialogue

- A: If the system focused more on education, fewer would have reoffended.
B: But if we hadn't punished criminals, society would be more dangerous now.
A: If Norway hadn't tried rehabilitation, we wouldn't have the evidence.
B: If I were in charge, I would have invested in mental health years ago.

◆ Writing Task

Write 80–120 words about how a past decision affects your present or how your personality shaped past events:

- If you had studied something different, what would your life be like now?
- If you were more/less [quality], what would you have done differently?

Use at least 2 Mixed A and 2 Mixed B conditionals.

9 Review Checklist

I can now...

- ✓ understand a debate article about prison reform
- ✓ use vocabulary related to crime, justice and the legal system
- ✓ use Mixed A: past cause → present result
- ✓ use Mixed B: present cause → past result
- ✓ distinguish mixed conditionals from 2nd and 3rd conditionals
- ✓ discuss justice and write about hypothetical scenarios



Congratulations!

You have completed Lesson 14: Behind the Verdict.