

GRAMMAR · LESSON 14 · B1

# If I lived on Mars, I would miss the ocean.

Second Conditional — if + past simple, would + base verb

The second conditional is the grammar of imagination. **If + past simple, would + base verb.** For things that are **unlikely, imaginary, or impossible** — the opposite of the first conditional's real plans.

🕒 50 min

🎯 Imagination

📊 CEFR B1

👶 Ages 11-16

## What you'll learn

- Form the second conditional: **if + past simple, would + base verb** for imaginary situations.
- Distinguish first conditional (**real**, if + present, will) from second (**imaginary**, if + past, would).
- Use '**if I were**' (subjunctive), **could/might** in the result, and '**If I were you, I'd ...**' for advice.

1

WARM-UP · 4 MIN

## What would you do?

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| Q1 | If you could have any superpower, what would you choose?              |
| Q2 | If school started at noon, how would your mornings change?            |
| Q3 | If you won a million euros, what would you do first?                  |
| Q4 | If you were the head teacher for one day, what rule would you change? |

2

GRAMMAR FOCUS · 18 MIN

## The if-would formula

The second conditional has the same shape as the first — two clauses, one condition, one result. But the tenses shift back, and the meaning shifts from **real** to **imaginary**.

**If + past simple** , **would + base verb**

IF-CLAUSE (IMAGINARY)	RESULT (IMAGINARY)
<p><b>Past simple</b> — but the meaning is present or future, not past. Past tense creates <i>distance from reality</i>.</p> <p>If I <b>had</b> a car ... If she <b>spoke</b> French ... If we <b>lived</b> in Tokyo ...</p>	<p><b>would + base verb</b> — the imaginary consequence.</p> <p>... I'd <b>drive</b> to school. ... she'd <b>get</b> the job. ... we'd <b>eat</b> ramen every day.</p>

### First vs Second — same shape, different world

FIRST (real)	SECOND (imaginary)
<p>If it <b>rains</b> tomorrow, we <b>'ll cancel</b>.</p> <p>(Real — it might rain.)</p>	<p>If it <b>rained</b> every day, the Sahara <b>would</b> be a forest.</p> <p>(Imaginary — it doesn't.)</p>
<p>If I <b>have</b> enough money, I <b>'ll buy</b> a guitar.</p> <p>(Possible — I'm saving.)</p>	<p>If I <b>had</b> a million, I <b>'d buy</b> a house.</p> <p>(Imaginary — I don't.)</p>

### "If I were" and other details

Traditional grammar uses **were** for all persons in the second conditional (subjunctive): *if I were, if she were, if it were*. 'If I was' is acceptable in speech but **'if I were'** is safer for exams.

<b>COULD / MIGHT</b>	<p><b>Less certain imaginary outcome.</b></p> <p>If I lived closer, I <b>could</b> walk. If she studied harder, she <b>might</b> get an A.</p>
<b>ADVICE</b>	<p><b>'If I were you, I'd ...' — classic advice pattern.</b></p> <p>If I were you, I'd talk to the teacher about it.</p>
<b>WISH LINK</b>	<p><b>'I wish I had ...' = 'If I had ..., I would ...' (same tense shift).</b></p> <p>I wish I had more time. (= If I had more time, I would read more.)</p>

#### ⚠ Three classic B1 mistakes

- ❑ ~~If I would have a car, I would drive.~~    ❑ **If I had a car, I'd drive.** (Never 'would' in the if-clause.)
- ❑ ~~If she will study more, she would pass.~~    ❑ **If she studied more, she'd pass.** (Past simple in if, not will.)
- ❑ ~~If I was the president, I will change the law.~~    ❑ **If I were the president, I'd change the law.** (Were for subjunctive; would in result.)

## 3

## KEY VOCABULARY · 6 MIN

## Ten words for imagination and dreams

Word	POS	Meaning	Example
<b>imaginary</b>	<i>adj</i>	existing only in the mind	<i>The story takes place in an imaginary world.</i>
<b>hypothetical</b>	<i>adj</i>	based on a situation that is imagined	<i>Let me ask a hypothetical question.</i>
<b>unlikely</b>	<i>adj</i>	probably not going to happen	<i>It's unlikely, but if it happened, I'd be thrilled.</i>
<b>to imagine</b>	<i>v</i>	to form a picture of something not real	<i>Imagine you lived on the moon.</i>
<b>to wish</b>	<i>v</i>	to want something that is not true or likely	<i>I wish I could speak five languages.</i>
<b>reality</b>	<i>n</i>	what is true or actually exists	<i>In reality, I can't travel that far.</i>
<b>opportunity</b>	<i>n</i>	a chance to do something	<i>If I had the opportunity, I'd study abroad.</i>
<b>to suppose</b>	<i>v</i>	to think or assume something is possible	<i>Suppose you had no homework.</i>
<b>ideal</b>	<i>adj</i>	the best possible; perfect	<i>In an ideal world, nobody would be hungry.</i>
<b>to pretend</b>	<i>v</i>	to act as if something is true when it is not	<i>Let's pretend we were astronauts.</i>

4

READING · 12 MIN

## What If I Lived on Mars?

# What If I *Lived on Mars*?

THE PULSE · ISSUE 16  
A WEEK OF "WHAT IF?"

*Sana, 15, signed up for a creative writing workshop in Marrakech expecting poetry. Instead, her teacher asked the class to imagine impossible worlds. Every sentence started with "if."*

S

### Sana, 15

Marrakech · Morocco

*"If I were a bird, I'd fly over the Atlas Mountains every morning."*

The workshop met on Saturday mornings in a riad near the old medina. On the first day, the teacher, Mr Benali, wrote one sentence on the board: "**If you lived** on Mars, what **would** you miss most about Earth?" The answers flowed. "**If I lived** on Mars, **I'd miss** the ocean." "**If I lived** on Mars, **I wouldn't** miss school."

Mr Benali said: "You are all using the *past simple* in the if-clause — **if I lived, if I had, if I were** — but you are not talking about the past. You are talking about something **imaginary**. And the result uses **would**. That little shift — from present to past — is how English creates distance between what is real and what is only in your head."

One week, the class compared the two conditionals side by side. "**If it rains** tomorrow, **we'll cancel**" — first conditional, real plan. Then: "**If it rained** every day for a year, **the Sahara would turn** into a forest" — second conditional, imaginary. Mr Benali: "The only difference is how far the idea is from reality."

On the last Saturday, Sana read her favourite piece. "**If I were** a bird, **I'd fly** over the Atlas Mountains every morning. **If I had** wings, **I wouldn't need** a bus pass. **If the sky were** my home, **I'd never come down** — except for my mother's couscous." Mr Benali said: "You took an impossible idea, put it in a past-simple if-clause, and made us believe it for a moment."

... FOUR MORE "WHAT IF?" LIVES ...

I

Idris, 14 · Lagos · Nigeria

Lottery

"**If I won** the lottery, **I'd build** a library in my neighbourhood." "**If I were** the richest person in Lagos? **I'd still** take the danfo to school."

H

Hana, 15 · Seoul · South Korea

Time travel

"**If I could** travel back in time, **I'd visit** the Joseon dynasty." Her friend: "**If time travel existed, everyone would** go back and fix their worst exam."

**M** Marco, 13 · Rome · Italy

Principal

"If I were the school principal, I'd make Friday afternoons free." His teacher: "If I were you, I'd focus on passing maths first."

**T** Talia, 14 · Christchurch · NZ

Earthquakes

"If earthquakes didn't exist, Christchurch would still have its old cathedral." "If we didn't have earthquakes, we wouldn't appreciate the calm days."

**If-clause** (past simple — imaginary)**Result** (would / could / might)

## 5

PRACTICE · 8 MIN

## 8 quick choices

1	If I ___ more time, I'd learn the guitar. · A) will have B) had C) would have
2	If she spoke Japanese, she ___ work in Tokyo. · A) will B) can C) could
3	If I ___ you, I'd apologise immediately. · A) were B) am C) would be
4	We ___ go to the beach every day if we lived near the coast. · A) will B) 'd C) are going to
5	If dogs ___ talk, what would they say? · A) can B) will C) could
6	If it ___ every day, the Sahara would be a forest. · A) rained B) rains C) would rain
7	What would you do if you ___ the last person on Earth? · A) are B) were C) would be
8	If it rains tomorrow, we ___ cancel. (REAL possibility.) · A) would B) 'd C) 'll

## 6

SPEAKING · 5 MIN

## The 'what if?' game

Q 1	If you could live anywhere for a year, where would you go?
Q 2	If you were famous, what would be the worst part?
Q 3	If you had a time machine: past or future?
Q 4	Your friend wants to skip school. 'If I were you, I'd ...'
Q 5	If money didn't exist, how would the world work?

## 7

WRITING · 10 MIN

## "If I woke up in a different life"



8

COMPREHENSION QUIZ · 6 MIN

## 10 questions

1	If I ___ a car, I'd drive to the coast. · A) have B) had C) would have D) will have
2	If she ___ the answer, she would tell us. · A) knows B) knew C) would know D) will know
3	I ___ travel the world if I didn't have school. · A) will B) can C) would D) am going to
4	If I were you, I ___ start revising now. · A) will B) would C) am going to D) must
5	What ___ you do if you found a wallet? · A) will B) do C) would D) did
6	If it ___ raining cats and dogs, I'd take a video. · A) starts B) started C) would start D) will start
7	She ___ be happier if she didn't work so much. · A) will B) is C) might D) can
8	If the Earth ___ flat, ships would fall off. · A) is B) were C) would be D) will be
9	If it rains tomorrow, we ___ cancel. (REAL possibility.) · A) would B) 'd C) 'll D) could have
10	If I ___ speak every language, I ___ never need a translator. · A) can / will B) could / would C) could / will D) would / could



**ANSWER KEYS**

## Check your answers

### Practice · Part 5

1	<b>B — had</b>	<i>If-clause = past simple.</i>
2	<b>C — could</b>	<i>Less certain imaginary result.</i>
3	<b>A — were</b>	<i>Subjunctive 'if I were you'.</i>
4	<b>B — 'd</b>	<i>Result = would ('d).</i>
5	<b>C — could</b>	<i>Past of can for imaginary ability.</i>
6	<b>A — rained</b>	<i>If-clause = past simple.</i>
7	<b>B — were</b>	<i>Subjunctive.</i>
8	<b>C — 'll</b>	<i>Real possibility = first conditional (will).</i>

### Quiz · Part 8

1	<b>B — had</b>	<i>Past simple in if-clause.</i>
2	<b>B — knew</b>	<i>Imaginary → past simple.</i>
3	<b>C — would</b>	<i>Imaginary result.</i>
4	<b>B — would</b>	<i>'If I were you' advice.</i>
5	<b>C — would</b>	<i>Imaginary situation.</i>
6	<b>B — started</b>	<i>Past simple (unlikely scenario).</i>
7	<b>C — might</b>	<i>Less certain imaginary result.</i>
8	<b>B — were</b>	<i>Subjunctive (Earth isn't flat).</i>
9	<b>C — 'll</b>	<i>REAL possibility = first conditional.</i>
10	<b>B — could / would</b>	<i>Second conditional: could in if, would in result.</i>

**Fantastic work on Lesson 14!** You now own both conditionals: first (if + present, will) for real plans, second (if + past, would) for imaginary worlds. You can give advice with 'If I were you' and express unreal dreams. In **Lesson 15**, we take the next step: **wish + past simple** — for things you want to be different right now but can't change.