

## Conditionals

### Zero conditional (if/when/whenever + present tense, present tense)

General or scientific facts and definitions

*If you **burn** fossil fuels, carbon dioxide **is produced**.*

### First conditional (if + present tense, will + bare infinitive / imperative)

Real conditions in the present or future and their results in the present or future

*If we **continue** to pollute our planet, future generations **will suffer**.*

To give conditional instructions

*If the people from Greenpeace **call**, **tell** them I'll call them back later.*

Watch out!

Other modals and semi-modals can be used instead of *will* in the result clause in first conditionals. These include *be going to*, *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *shall*, *should*, *have to* and *ought to*.

✓ We **might** prevent disaster if we change the way we live now.

### Second conditional (if + past simple / past continuous, would + bare infinitive)

Hypothetical conditions in the present or future and their hypothetical results in the present or future

*What **would** the local government **do** if there **was** an earthquake in the area?*

Watch out!

Other modals can be used instead of *would* in the result clause in second conditionals. These include *might* and *could*.

✓ *If the weather was better, we **could** have a picnic.*

### vs Grammar

- In British English, we can use both *was* and *were* after *if* with first and third person singular. *Were* is more common in a formal style. In American English, it is usual to use *were*.  
UK: *If I **was/were** a gambler, I'd put money on Jim being late.*  
US: *If I **were** a gambler, I'd put money on Jim being late.*
- In both British and American English, *were* is usually used in the phrase *If I were you, ...*