

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

A

Compare these examples:

- (1) LISA: Shall we go by bus or by train?
JESS: **If we go** by bus, it **will** be cheaper.

For Jess, it is possible that they will go by bus, so she says:

If we go by bus, it **will** be ...



LISA JESS

- (2) Lisa and Jess decide to go by train.

Later, Jess talks to Joe.

JOE: How are you going to travel?

JESS: We're going by train. **If we went** by bus, it **would** be cheaper, but the train is quicker.

Now Jess knows they are not going to travel by bus, so she says:

If we went by bus, it **would** be ... (not If we go ...)

If we went by bus, it would be cheaper.



JOE

JESS

When we imagine something that will not happen, or we don't expect that it will happen, we use **if + past** (if we **went** / if there **was** / if you **found** etc.).

But the meaning is *not* past:

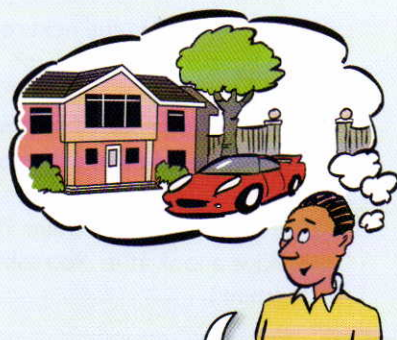
- ☐ What would you do **if you won** a lot of money? (we don't really expect this to happen)
- ☐ **If there was** (or **were**) an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?

For **if ... was/were**, see Unit 39C.

Compare **if I find** and **if I found**:

- ☐ I think I left my watch at your house. **If you find** it, can you call me?

but **If you found** a wallet in the street, what would you do with it?



If I won a lot of money ...

B

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

- ☐ I'd be very scared **if somebody pointed** a gun at me. (not if somebody would point)
- ☐ **If we went** by bus, it would be cheaper. (not If we would go)

But you can use **if ... would** when you ask somebody to do something:

- ☐ (from a formal letter) I would be grateful **if you would let** me know your decision as soon as possible.

C

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

- ☐ What **would** you **do** if you were bitten by a snake?
- ☐ I'm not going to bed yet. I'm not tired. If I went to bed now, I **wouldn't sleep**.
- ☐ **Would** you **mind** if I used your phone?

Could and **might** are also possible:

- ☐ If I won a lot of money, I **might buy** a house. (= it is possible that I would buy a house)
- ☐ If it stopped raining, we **could go** out. (= we would be able to go out)

38.1 What do you say in these situations?

- Of course you don't expect to win the lottery. Which do you say?
 a If I win the lottery, I'll buy a big house. ☐
 b If I won the lottery, I'd buy a big house. ☒ (b is correct)
- You're not going to sell your car because it's old and not worth much. Which do you say?
 a If I sell my car, I won't get much money for it. ☐
 b If I sold my car, I wouldn't get much money for it. ☐
- You often see Sarah. A friend of yours wants to contact her. Which do you say?
 a If I see Sarah, I'll tell her to call you. ☐
 b If I saw Sarah, I'd tell her to call you. ☐
- You don't expect that there will be a fire in the building. Which do you say?
 a What will you do if there is a fire in the building? ☐
 b What would you do if there was a fire in the building? ☐
- You've never lost your passport. You can only imagine it.
 a I don't know what I'll do if I lose my passport. ☐
 b I don't know what I'd do if I lost my passport. ☐
- Somebody stops you and asks the way to a bank. Which do you say?
 a If you go right at the end of this street, you'll see a bank on your left. ☐
 b If you went right at the end of this street, you'd see a bank on your left. ☐
- You're in a lift. There is an emergency button. Nobody is going to press it. Which do you say?
 a What will happen if somebody presses that button? ☐
 b What would happen if somebody pressed that button? ☐

38.2 Put the verb into correct form.

- I'd be very scared if somebody pointed (point) a gun at me.
- I can't afford to buy a car. If I buy (buy) a car, I'd have to borrow the money.
- Don't lend Amy your car. If she ask (ask) me, I wouldn't lend her mine.
- If the computer factory closed down, many people lose (lose) their jobs.
- I don't think Gary and Emma will get married. I be (be) amazed if they did.
- What would you do if you be (be) in a lift and it stop (stop) between floors?
- If somebody give (give) me £10,000, I have (have) a very long holiday.

38.3 Write sentences beginning If ...

- We've decided not to catch the 10.30 train. (arrive too early)
If we caught the 10.30 train, we'd arrive too early.
- Kevin is not going to do his driving test now. (fail)
 If he fail
- We've decided not to stay at a hotel. (cost too much)
 If cost too much
- Sally isn't going to leave her job. (not / get another one)
not / get another one
- We've decided not to invite Ben to the party. (have to invite his friends too)
have to invite his friends too
- I'm not going to tell him what happened. (not / believe me)
not / believe me

38.4 Use your own ideas to complete these sentences.

- If I won a lot of money, I'd buy a house.
- I'd be very angry if ...
- If you bought a car, ...
- I'd be surprised if ...
- Would you mind if ...

If I knew ... I wish I knew ...

A Study this example situation:

Sarah wants to phone Paul, but she can't do this because she doesn't know his number. She says:

If I knew his number, I **would phone** him.

Sarah says: **If I knew** his number ... This tells us that she *doesn't* know his number. She is imagining the situation. The *real* situation is that she doesn't know his number.



If I knew his number ...

When we imagine a situation like this, we use **if + past (if I knew / if you were / if we didn't etc.)**. But the meaning is present, *not* past:

- ☐ There are many things I'd like to do **if I had** more time. (but I don't have time)
- ☐ **If I didn't** want to go to the party, I wouldn't go. (but I want to go)
- ☐ We wouldn't have any money **if we didn't** work. (but we work)
- ☐ **If you were** in my position, what would you do?
- ☐ It's a pity he can't drive. It would be useful **if he could**.

B We use the past in the same way after **wish** (**I wish I knew / I wish you were** etc.). We use **wish** to say that we regret something, that something is not as we would like it to be:

- ☐ I **wish I knew** Paul's phone number.
(= I don't know it and I regret this)
- ☐ Do you ever **wish you could** fly?
(you can't fly)
- ☐ It rains a lot here. I **wish it didn't** rain so much.
- ☐ It's very crowded here. I **wish there weren't** so many people. (there are a lot of people)
- ☐ I **wish I didn't** have to work tomorrow, but unfortunately I do.



C If I were / if I was

After **if** and **wish**, you can use **were** instead of **was** (**if I were / I wish it were** etc.).

If I was / I wish it was are also possible. So you can say:

- | | | |
|--|----|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> If I were you, I wouldn't buy that coat. | or | If I was you, ... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I'd go for a walk if it weren't so cold. | or | ... if it wasn't so cold. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I wish she were here. | or | I wish she was here. |

D We do not normally use **would** in the **if**-part of the sentence or after **wish**:

- ☐ **If I were** rich, I **would** travel a lot. (*not* If I would be rich)
- ☐ Who **would** you ask **if you needed** help? (*not* if you would need)
- ☐ I **wish I had** something to read. (*not* I wish I would have)

Sometimes **wish ... would** is possible: **I wish you would listen**. See Unit 41.

E **Could** sometimes means 'would be able to' and sometimes 'was/were able to':

- ☐ She **could** get a better job (she **could** get = she would be able to get)
if she **could** speak English. (if she **could** speak = if she was/were able to speak)
- ☐ I wish I **could** help you. (I wish I could = I wish I was able)

Exercises

39.1 Put the verb into the correct form.

- 1 If I knew (I / know) his number, I would phone him.
- 2 I wouldn't buy (I / not / buy) that coat if I were you.
- 3 (I / help) you if I could, but I'm afraid I can't.
- 4 We don't need a car at present, but we would need a car if (we / live) in the country.
- 5 If we had the choice, (we / live) in the country.
- 6 This soup isn't very good. (it / taste) better if it wasn't so salty.
- 7 I wouldn't mind living in England if the weather (be) better.
- 8 If I were you, (I / not / wait). (I / go) now.
- 9 You're always tired. If (you / not / go) to bed so late every night, you wouldn't be tired all the time.
- 10 I think there are too many cars. If (there / not / be) so many cars, (there / not / be) so much pollution.

39.2 Write a sentence with **if ...** for each situation.

- 1 We don't see you very often because you live so far away.
If you didn't live so far away, we'd see you more often.
- 2 It's a nice book but it's too expensive, so I'm not going to buy it.
I it if so
- 3 We don't go out very often – we can't afford it.
We more often
- 4 I can't meet you tomorrow – I have to work late.
If
- 5 It would be nice to have lunch outside but it's raining, so we can't.
We
- 6 I don't want his advice, and that's why I'm not going to ask for it.
If

39.3 Write sentences beginning **I wish ...**

- 1 I don't know many people (and I'm lonely). I wish I knew more people.
- 2 I don't have a computer (and I need one). I wish
- 3 Helen isn't here (and I need to see her).
- 4 It's cold (and I hate cold weather).
- 5 I live in a big city (and I don't like it).
- 6 I can't go to the party (and I'd like to).
- 7 I have to get up early tomorrow (but I'd like to sleep late).
.....
- 8 I don't know anything about cars (and my car has just broken down).
.....
- 9 I'm not feeling well (and it's not nice).
.....

39.4 Write your own sentences beginning **I wish ...**

- 1 (somewhere you'd like to be now – on the beach, in New York, in bed etc.)
I wish I
- 2 (something you'd like to have – a motorbike, more friends, lots of money etc.)
.....
- 3 (something you'd like to be able to do – sing, travel more, cook etc.)
.....
- 4 (something you'd like to be – beautiful, strong, younger etc.)
.....

If I had known ... I wish I had known ...

A

Study this example situation:

Last month Gary was in hospital for a few days. Rachel didn't know this, so she didn't go to visit him. They met a few days ago.

Rachel said:

If I'd known you were in hospital, I **would have gone** to see you.

Rachel said: **If I'd known** (= If I **had** known) you were in hospital. This tells us that she *didn't* know.

We use **if + had ('d)** ... to talk about the past (**if I had known/been/done** etc.):

- ☐ I didn't see you when you passed me in the street. **If I'd seen** you, of course I would have said hello. (but I didn't see you)
- ☐ I didn't go out last night. I would have gone out **if I hadn't been** so tired. (but I was tired)
- ☐ **If he had been looking** where he was going, he wouldn't have walked into the wall. (but he wasn't looking)
- ☐ The view was wonderful. **If I'd had** a camera with me, I would have taken some pictures. (but I didn't have a camera)

Compare:

- ☐ I'm not hungry. **If I was** hungry, I would eat something. (*now*)
- ☐ I wasn't hungry. **If I had been** hungry, I would have eaten something. (*past*)

B

Do not use **would** in the **if**-part of the sentence. We use **would** in the other part of the sentence:

- ☐ **If I had seen** you, I **would have said** hello. (*not* If I would have seen you)

Note that **'d** can be **would** or **had**:

- ☐ If **I'd seen** you, (I'd seen = I **had** seen)
- ☐ I'd **have said** hello. (I'd have said = I **would** have said)

C

We use **had (done)** in the same way after **wish**. I **wish** something **had happened** = I am sorry that it didn't happen:

- ☐ I **wish I'd known** that Gary was ill. I would have gone to see him. (but I didn't know)
- ☐ I feel sick. I **wish I hadn't eaten** so much cake. (I ate too much cake)
- ☐ Do you **wish you'd studied** science instead of languages? (you didn't study science)

Do not use **would have** ... after **wish**:

- ☐ The weather was cold when we were on holiday. I wish it **had been** warmer. (*not* I wish it would have been)

D

Compare **would (do)** and **would have (done)**:

- ☐ If I'd gone to the party last night, I **would be** tired now. (I am not tired now – *present*)
- ☐ If I'd gone to the party last night, I **would have met** lots of people. (I didn't meet lots of people – *past*)

Compare **would have**, **could have** and **might have**:

- ☐ If the weather hadn't been so bad, {
 - we **would have gone** out.
 - we **could have gone** out.
 - (= we would have been able to go out)
 - we **might have gone** out.
 - (= perhaps we would have gone out)

Exercises

40.1 Put the verb into the correct form.

- I didn't see you when you passed me in the street. If I'd seen (I / see) you, I would have said (I / say) hello.
- Sam got to the station just in time to catch the train to the airport. If (he / miss) the train, (he / miss) his flight too.
- I'm glad that you reminded me about Rachel's birthday. (I / forget) if (you / not / remind) me.
- I wanted to send you an email, but I didn't have your email address. If (I / have) your address, (I / send) you an email.
- A: How was your trip? Was it good?
B: It was OK, but (we / enjoy) it more if the weather (be) better.
- I took a taxi to the hotel, but the traffic was bad. (it / be) quicker if (I / walk).
- I'm not tired. If (I / be) tired, I'd go home now.
- I wasn't tired last night. If (I / be) tired, I would have gone home earlier.

40.2 For each situation, write a sentence beginning with **If**.

- I wasn't hungry, so I didn't eat anything.
If I'd been hungry, I would have eaten something.
- The accident happened because the road was icy.
If the road, the accident
- I didn't know that Joe had to get up early, so I didn't wake him up.
If I that he had to get up early,
- Unfortunately I lost my phone, so I couldn't call you.
If
- Karen wasn't injured in the crash because she was wearing a seat belt.
.....
- You didn't have breakfast – that's why you're hungry now.
.....
- I didn't get a taxi because I didn't have enough money.
.....

40.3 Imagine that you are in these situations. For each situation, write a sentence with **I wish**.

- You've eaten too much and now you feel sick.
You say: I wish I hadn't eaten so much.
- There was a job advertised in the paper. You decided not to apply for it. Now you think that your decision was wrong.
You say: I wish I
- When you were younger, you never learned to play a musical instrument. Now you regret this.
You say:
- You've painted the gate red. Now you think that red was the wrong colour.
You say:
- You are walking in the country. You'd like to take some pictures, but you didn't bring your camera.
You say:
- You have some unexpected guests. They didn't phone you first to say they were coming. You are very busy and you are not prepared for them.
You say (to yourself):