

# The second conditional



If I **had** enough money, I'd buy that diamond necklace.

## Definition

The second conditional refers to events that are not likely to happen in the future or to conditions that are not possible in the present.

## Construction

If + past tense + modal verb in the simple past form + bare infinitive.

If they **had** more money, they **would buy** a new a new car.

'Were' is usually used for all forms of 'be' in the 'if' clause.

If they **were** rich, they **would buy** a new a new car.

## Uses

Use

Examples

## Hypothesis



If the airline **lost** my luggage, I **would need** to buy a suit for the meeting.

This is a hypothetical situation and the speaker may not even be travelling.

Contrast this with a first conditional sentence. 'If the airline **loses** my luggage, I **will need** to buy a suit'. In this case the speaker feels that there is a real risk that the airline will lose his luggage.

## Contingency



What **would** you **do** if you had to choose another career?

## Wishing



If I **won** the lottery, I'd **buy** a boat and cruise the world.

## Suggesting



I think it **would** be better if we sent a small sample to the customers.

## Advising



If I **were** you, I'd **apply** for a promotion.

## Criticism



If this **were** my office, I'd **tidy** it up.

## Polite request



**Would** it be all right, if I **brought** a friend with me?

# Formality

**It is considered grammatically correct to use 'were' for all forms of 'be' in conditional sentences, but in spoken English you will often hear 'was' for I, he, she and it.**

**If I was rich, I would buy a boat.**

**If he wasn't so busy, he could have a holiday.**

**We would go to the park, if it wasn't raining.**

**In written English and certainly for any test situation, use 'were' for all forms of 'be'.**



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