

# 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

Construction	Time reference	Example
1. 'if' + past, + 'would/could' + bare infinitive	1. future condition + future result 2. present condition + present result 3. present condition + future result	If I <b>won</b> the lottery, I <b>would</b> buy that car. If I <b>were</b> rich, I <b>could</b> buy that car. If I <b>were</b> rich, I <b>would</b> buy that car.
2. 'if' + 'were to' + infinitive, + would/could + bare infinitive		If I <b>were to win</b> the lottery, I <b>would</b> buy that car.

### Note that

## 1. Continuous tenses are also possible.

If I **weren't** working today, I'd be **enjoying** the sunshine.

## 2. As with all conditionals the 'if' clause can come first or second. When it comes first, it is followed by a comma.

# Uses

Use	Examples
Hypothesis	 <p>If the airline <b>lost</b> my luggage, I <b>would need</b> 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 <b>loses</b> my luggage, I <b>will need</b> to buy a suit'. In this case the speaker feels that there is a real risk that the airline will lose his luggage.</p>
Contingency	 <p>What <b>would</b> you <b>do</b> if you had to choose another career?</p>
Wishing	 <p>If I <b>won</b> the lottery, I'd <b>buy</b> a boat and cruise the world.</p>
Suggesting	 <p>I think it <b>would</b> be better if we sent a small sample to the customers.</p>

Advising		If I <b>were</b> you, I'd apply for a promotion.
Criticism		If this <b>were</b> my office, I'd tidy it up.
Polite request		<b>Would</b> it be all right, if I <b>brought</b> 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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