

# Zero conditional

## Introduction



If you **heat** water in a kettle, it **boils**.

## Definition

The zero conditional refers to real events. The result of the condition is always the same.

## Construction

Construction	Time reference	Example
'if' + present, + present	any time condition + any time result	If the sun <b>shines</b> , people <b>are</b> happier.

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

## Uses

Zero conditional sentences are used to talk about general truths and facts, not about individual, specific situations.

Use	Examples
Scientific facts	If you <b>add</b> salt to water, it <b>boils</b> more quickly.
Universal truths	People <b>put</b> on weight if they <b>eat</b> too much.

**Things that happen regularly**    **If I leave home at 8.00, I arrive at work at 9.00.**

**Note that** because the result is always the same, we can use 'when' as an alternative to 'if'. We also sometimes use 'whenever', especially for things that happen regularly:

If/when people **don't drink**, they **get** thirsty.  
If/when/whenever he's late for work, his boss **gets** angry.

## Present continuous

We can also use the present continuous:

If it's **raining**, people **carry** umbrellas.  
If people **are carrying** umbrellas, it's probably **raining**.

## Imperative

Whenever you're tired, **take** a break.

When I'm working, **don't disturb** me.

If you **go** to Paris, **visit** the Louvre.

## Modals

Some modal verbs might be used in the main clause.

If you **go** to another country, you **should try** to speak the language.  
You **can get** a refund if the plane **is** delayed.

## Zero or first conditional?

The first conditional is used for real, likely events. Compare these two sentences:

**If I leave home at 8.00, I arrive at 9.00. [this refers to every time I leave at 8.00]**

**If I leave home at 8.00, I'll arrive at 9.00. [this refers to a specific occasion in the future]**

## Examples



**The alarm goes off if there's a fire.**



**Only children go in the garden if it's raining.**



**When you work with people from other countries, you might have to do things differently.**



**If she's eating then she's getting better.**



**If you visit London, don't miss the Beefeaters at the Tower of London.**



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