The first conditional



If you win this game you will play in the championship match.

Definition

The first conditional refers to events that are likely to happen in the future.

The result is not definite but is, at least, possible.

Construction

Construction	Time reference	Example
'If' + present, + future	future condition + future result	If the sun shines, people will be happier.

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

Note that we do not normally use 'will' in the 'if' clause even though it refers to the future, but see the paragraph below on 'using modal verbs' for some exceptions.

'Will' is not the only future form that can be used. Here are some more examples:

Main Clause	Example
Future using 'will'/'shall'	If it rains, I'll take an umbrella If it rains, shall we go to the cinema? If it rains, we won't go to the park.
Future using 'be going to'	If you don't leave now, you're going to be late. If it rains, where are we going to have our picnic? If I see John, I'm not going to tell him we lost the contract.

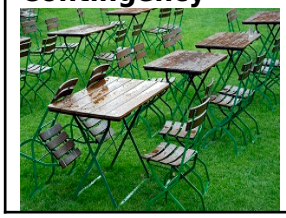
Future continuous	**If you don't arrive before 10.00, we'll be waiting to start the meeting.** **If Akira gets the 3:30 flight, he'll be arriving at the same time as John.**
Future perfect	**If you don't arrive until 10.00, we'll have finished the meeting.** **If you get to London before 4.00, the rush hour won't have started.**
Imperative	**If the children are asleep, don't make a noise.** **If you need any help, please ask.** **If there are no chairs, sit on the floor.**
Using other modals	**If I don't leave at 8.00, I may be late for work.** **If I start work now, can I finish early?** **If it rains, I can take an umbrella.** **If you don't leave soon, you might be late.**

And there are also alternatives to the present simple:

'if'clause	Example
Present continuous	**If you're working, I'll come back later.** **If he's playing football, he'll be out all afternoon.**
Present perfect	**If you've finished the report, could you fax me a copy?** **If I've finished it on time, I'll send it in the morning.**

Uses

Use	Examples
Prediction 	**If the train is delayed, I'm going to be late for my meeting.**

Plans 	**We're having a barbeque on Sunday, if it doesn't rain.**
Logical conclusion 	**If a customer calls, the phone will ring.**
Exchange 	**If you get me to the airport quickly, I'll give you a big tip.**
Offers 	**If your car isn't working, I'll help you.**
Contingency 	**If it rains, we'll go to the cinema instead.**

Using modal verbs in 'if' clauses

As previously mentioned, the future is not normally used in the 'if' clause. However, we do use 'will' and other modals in the 'if' clause when the meaning is not to indicate the future.

Using 'will' to express exchange or persistence [See also will/would for repeated actions.]

If you'll take the food, I'll take the wine. [exchange]

If you *will* insist on leaving the windows open, we're going to have a huge heating bill.
[persistence - in this case the word 'will' is stressed]

Using 'can' to express ability

If I can find the time, I'll come to the party.
If you can type quickly and accurately, you're not going to have problems finding a job.

Using 'must' to express a feeling of necessity

If you *must* eat so quickly, you'll get indigestion.
If she *must* be there so early, she'll have to leave before the rush hour.

Zero or first conditional?

The first conditional is used for specific 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]

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