

THE SECOND CONDITIONAL

Examples

1. If I really **had** a million dollars, I'd **buy** a great big house and a new car, and then I'd travel around the world.
2. **Would** you **race** cars, too?
3. If one of my fantasies **could** come true, I'd **ask** for world peace.
4. If I **were** rich, I could make my fantasies come true.

Explanations

1. The second conditional is used to talk about situations that are hypothetical, unreal, or impossible. In the second conditional, past tenses are used.

*If you **were** ready, we **could go** now.
(But you aren't ready, so we can't)

*If we **knew** his phone number, we **would call** him. (We don't know his number, so we can't call him.)

2. Second conditional sentences have two parts. The **if** clause tells the condition. The result clause tells the hypothetical or effect of the condition.

3. The conditional clause describes an improbable, impossible, or unreal situation. The past tense is used in the conditional clause.

*If they **cares** about world peace, they would stop fighting.

4. The result clause tells the consequence. **Would** or **could** is used in the result clause.

*If we knew the answer, we **could tell** you.

5. In the second conditional, **were** is used with all persons.

*If I **were** on time more often, I wouldn't get in trouble.

*If they **were** here, they could tell us what to do.

6. Simple sentences with **would** and **could** imply the existence of an **if** clause.

*Would you race cars, too?
(If your fantasy came true, would you do this too?)

7. The conditional and result clauses can be in either order. When the **if** clause comes first, a comma is used.

*If we had more time, we could spend another day here.

*We could spend another day here if we had more time.

Exercise 4: It would be different if --

Directions: Combine the sentences in each item into one sentence. Use the second conditional.

1. She doesn't have enough money. She can't go on vacation.

2. Molly can't act. She can't be in the school play.

3. Stevie is shy. He won't call up any of his classmates.

4. Chicago is cold in the spring. People don't go swimming.

5. I don't have Katya's phone number. I can't call her.

6. I can't bake. I don't make delicious cakes and pies.

Exercise 5: Not the Case

Directions: Complete each sentence. Use the second conditional.

1. If Sandra were here, _____

2. I'd call Julie back _____

3. If it weren't snowing, _____

4. I'd buy my sister that DVD _____

5. If I were you, _____

6. I'd finish painting the kitchen _____

GRAMMAR CHECK

A. Use the cues in parentheses to complete the sentences.

1. If you had one wish, what **(it, be)** _____?
2. You could be anything you wanted if you **(try)** _____ harder.
3. If we stop dreaming about the future, there **(be)** _____ no future.
4. If I **(be)** _____ in charge, I would be able to do anything I wanted.
5. Henry **(feel)** _____ better if he didn't always eat fast food.

B. Complete each sentence. Use the second conditional.

1. If I could see into the future, _____

2. I would sleep late every morning _____

3. If I were a police officer, _____

4. I would be very angry _____

5. What would you do _____

6. If I weren't studying English, _____

C. If you could change something about your life, what would you change? Write a short paragraph.
