



WRITING CENTRE

Conditional sentences are used to discuss **possibilities**.

A conditional clause is a dependant clause starting with the word **'if'**.

THE ZERO CONDITIONAL

We can make a zero conditional sentence with two present simple verbs (one in the 'if clause' and one in the 'main clause'):

- If water **reaches** 100 degrees, it **boils**.
- if + present simple, present simple.

This conditional is used when the result will always happen. So, if water reaches 100 degrees, it always boils. It's a fact. I'm talking in general, not about one particular situation. The result of the 'if clause' is always the independent clause.

The 'if' in this conditional can usually be replaced by 'when' without changing the meaning.

THE FIRST CONDITIONAL

The first conditional has the present simple after 'if', then the future simple in the other clause:

- If it **rains**, I **won't go** to the park.
- if + present simple, ... will + infinitive

It's used to talk about things which might happen in the future.

First vs. Zero Conditional:

The first conditional describes a particular situation, whereas the zero conditional describes what happens in general.

THE SECOND CONDITIONAL

The second conditional uses the past simple after if, then 'would' and the simple present:

- If I **won** the lottery, I would buy a big house.
- If I **had** his number, I would call him.
- if + past simple, ...would + simple present

It has two uses.

1. We can use it to talk about things in the future that are probably not going to be true.
2. We can use it to talk about something in the present which is impossible.

This second conditional is different from the first conditional because it describes things which are a lot more unlikely.

THE THIRD CONDITIONAL

We make the third conditional by using the past perfect after 'if' and then 'would have' and the past participle in the independent clause of the sentence:

- If she **had studied**, she **would have passed** the exam
- if + past perfect, ...would + have + past participle

The third conditional talks about the past. It's used to describe a situation that didn't happen, and to imagine the result of this situation.