55 Unlikely/unreal conditions

If we **moved** out of the city, we**'d be** safer.

If this country **had** stricter laws against crime, we **wouldn't have to move!**

1 Second conditional

CONDITION *if* + past simple	RESULT *would (not)* + infinitive
*If we **moved** out of the city,*	*we **would** (we'd) be safer.*
*If he **wasn't** so miserable,*	*he **might*** **have** more friends.*
*If you **lived** in the country,*	*you'd **be able to** go/you **could go** horse-riding.*

* We use *might* in the result clause to make the result less certain.

2 Unlikely future conditions

We use the second conditional for future actions or situations that are possible, but UNLIKELY. Compare:
- FIRST CONDITIONAL *My boss is pleased with my work. If I get a pay rise this year, I'll buy a new car.* (I think I might get a pay rise.)
- SECOND CONDITIONAL *I know I've made a lot of mistakes at work, but if I got a pay rise this year, I'd buy a new car.* (I don't think I'll get a pay rise.)

3 Unreal present conditions

We can use the second conditional for present situations that are imaginary, not real:
*If they had stricter laws against crime, we **wouldn't have to move!*** (They don't have these laws.)
*We **wouldn't go** abroad if we **had** hot summers here.* (We don't have hot summers.)

4 Advice

We often use the expression *If I were you, I'd ...* to give personal advice:
***If I were you, I'd get** a taxi home from the party.* (= I think you should get a taxi.)

NATURAL ENGLISH Many people use *was* in this expression. Some people think this is incorrect:
[*I'd get more exercise **if I was you**.*] ✓ *I'd get more exercise **if I were you**.*

5 Alternatives to *if*

We can also introduce unlikely/unreal condition clauses with
- *unless* for unlikely conditions: ✓ *I wouldn't ask for your help **unless** I needed it.*
  but not unreal conditions:
  I would be more active ✗ ~~unless I had arthritis~~. ✓ *if I didn't have arthritis.*
- *imagine/suppose* to ask about imaginary situations:
  ***Imagine** you had a million dollars, what would you spend it on?* (You don't have a million dollars.)
  ***Suppose** they lived in the country, would they feel safer?* (They don't live in the country.)

FORMALITY CHECK In informal British English, we can also use *say*:
Say you could live anywhere in the world, where would you live?