

We can also use the second conditional for

- giving advice (with *were*): *If I were you, I would take her out of that school.*
- polite requests: *If you could deal with this matter, I'd be very grateful.*
- desires/regrets: *If we didn't have to work so hard, we could spend more time together.*

3 Forming the third conditional

We use the past perfect in the *if* clause and *would/wouldn't have* or modal verbs (usually *might have* or *could have*) in the main clause:

*If we **had paid** our cleaner more, she **wouldn't have left** us.*

*It **might have been** easier to break the news if I **had known** her a bit better.*

*If the spy **had intercepted** the message, he **could have averted** the crisis.*

We can use continuous forms in both clauses:

*If that taxi **hadn't come** along, you **would have been waiting** there for hours.*

*You **wouldn't have missed** the turning if you'd **been paying** attention.*

We can use a prepositional phrase (► Unit 9.2) instead of an *if* clause:

*Don't worry. I **wouldn't have done** it **without asking for permission first**.*

***But for its lack of a garden**, we **might have bought** that house.*

FORMALITY CHECK For a more formal or literary style, we can put *had* before the subject:

***Had** the film **been released** in the summer, it **might have been** more successful.*

***Had** it **not been** for his quick thinking, we **would have fallen** into the river.*

4 Uses of the third conditional

The third conditional describes an unreal or imagined situation or event in the past:

*If the sea defences **hadn't collapsed**, New Orleans **wouldn't have been** flooded.*

(But the known facts are: the sea defences did collapse and New Orleans was flooded.)

*I **would have used** your builder if I **had managed** to contact him.*

(But the known facts are: I didn't manage to contact him so I didn't use him.)

We can use the third conditional to express criticism or regret, often with *could have*:

*If you'd **been driving** more slowly, you **could have stopped** in time.*

*I **could have got** the job if I'd **performed** better in the interview.*

5 Mixed conditionals

There are several less common conditional patterns:

1 PAST CONDITION → FUTURE RESULT
If + past simple *will + infinitive/be going to*
*If they **left** at midnight yesterday, they **will be** here by lunchtime tomorrow.*

2 PAST CONDITION → PAST/PRESENT RESULT
If + past simple *present perfect*
*If you **gave** them all your money, you've **made** a big mistake.*

3 PAST UNREAL CONDITION → PRESENT RESULT
If + past perfect (third conditional) *would/could/might + infinitive (second conditional)*
*If your brother **hadn't had** that promotion, he **would still be** working here.*
 (He did have the promotion so he no longer works here.)

4 PRESENT UNREAL CONDITION → PAST RESULT
If + past simple (second conditional) *would/could/might have + past participle (third conditional)*
*If the island **were still** a tourist attraction, **more people would have died** in the earthquake.*
 (The island is no longer a tourist attraction so fewer people died.)

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