

16 Zero, first and second conditionals

1 ZERO CONDITIONAL

If + PRESENT SIMPLE + $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{PRESENT} \\ \text{SIMPLE} \end{array} \right.$
If you eat too much, you get fat.

We use **if** + Present Simple + Present Simple to talk about something that is true at any time:

*If something **is** lighter than water, it **floats**.
I **don't** cycle to work if it's very cold.*

2 FIRST CONDITIONAL

If + PRESENT SIMPLE + will (or 'll)
If I see Ann, I'll invite her.

We use **if** + Present Simple + **will** to talk about things that are possible in the future:

*We **will go** to the beach this Saturday if the weather **is** hot enough. (= It's possible it will be hot.)*

Note that in this sentence there is a possibility and a result:

future possibility + result
If it's hot, we will go to the beach.

If the result is only possible, not certain, we use **might** (not **will**):

*If it's hot, we **might go** to the beach.
(= It is possible that we will go to the beach if it's hot.)*

We can use **unless** to mean 'if...not':

*We will go to the mountains on Saturday **unless** it rains. (= ...if it doesn't rain.)
Unless you pay for the broken window, I'll phone the police. (= If you don't pay, ...)*

3 SECOND CONDITIONAL

If + PAST SIMPLE + would (or 'd)
If he worked less, he'd enjoy life more.

We use **if** + Past Simple + **would** to talk about the present, and to imagine something different from the real situation now:

*If Shakespeare was alive today, what **would** he **write** about? (Shakespeare isn't alive today.)*

*If animals **could** speak, we **would be** able to discover what they think. (We aren't able to discover what animals think, because they can't speak.)*

*If he **didn't live** so close to his office, he **wouldn't be** able to stay in bed so late in the morning.*

We can also use the second conditional to talk about an unlikely situation in the future:

*If all the ice in the world **melted**, many coastal towns **would disappear**.*

Practice

A Write what happens when you heat these things, as in the example.

- 0 The boiling point of water is 100 degrees centigrade.
So if you heat water to 100 degrees, it boils. _____
- 1 The melting point of gold is 1063 degrees centigrade.
So _____
- 2 The boiling point of alcohol is 78 degrees.
So _____
- 3 The melting point of silver is 960 degrees.
So _____

B Complete each sentence using the verb in brackets in the Present Simple or with **will**, as in the examples.

- 0 If she wins _____ (win) a prize, Mary will be _____ (be) very happy.
- 1 If John _____ (come) this weekend, we _____ (go) to the theatre.
- 2 If Ann _____ (write) to me, I _____ (tell) you what she says.