

# Second Conditional

## What is the second conditional?

The second conditional, also sometimes called type two conditionals, is a structure to describe unreal or unlikely events in the future. For example:

*If I won the lottery, I would give some money to charity.*  
*If he went to class more often, he would pass the tests.*

## What is the sentence structure?

The second conditional consist of two clauses, an if-clause and a main clause.

**IF-CLAUSE:** If | subject | past tense verb | object/complement

If | Kate | won | the lottery  
If | he | went | to class more often  
If | I | quit | my job

**MAIN CLAUSE:** subject | would | main verb | object/complement

Kate | would | quit | her job.  
He | would | pass | the tests.  
I | would | travel | around the world.

Put the if-clause and the main clause together, and you have a second conditional sentence. Notice there is a comma between the IF-CLAUSE and MAIN CLAUSE:

*If Kate won the lottery, she would quit her job.*  
*If he went to class more often, he would pass the tests.*

The clauses may be inverted (MAIN CLAUSE + IF-CLAUSE). There is no comma then. For example:

Kate *would* quit her job *if* she won the lottery.  
He *would* pass the tests *if* he went to class more often.

## How are second conditionals used?

Second conditionals describe an unreal or very unlikely future. Because the condition (if-clause) isn't real, the outcome (main clause) will never occur. For example:

A: What *would* you do *if* you quit your job?  
B: *If* I quit my job, I *would* travel around the world for a year.

It's unlikely that I will quit my job. Perhaps I can't afford to quit. Perhaps I have no immediate plans to quit. Perhaps I don't want to quit because I like where I work. Whatever the reason, the

opportunity to travel around the world won't happen as long as I continue to go to the office. At least for the present, the answer describes an impossible future. Here are a few more examples:

If Angelina Jolie met me, she would instantly fall in love with me.

If the US attacked Russia, it would be the end of the world.

I would probably get a lot of speeding tickets if I owned a Ferrari.

### Is there additional information on the second conditional?

Yes, there are a two points. First, other modals may be used in lieu of would. In particular, *could*, *might*, and *should* may be used, which adds an element of speculation or possibility to the sentences.

If the US attacked Russia, it *might* be the end of the world.

If I quit my job, I *could* travel around the world.

In addition, the simple past of be is always were when using the second conditional. For example:

○ If I were rich, I would own fifty-two cars. I would drive a different car each week!

✗ If I was rich, I would own fifty-two cars.

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