

Third and mixed conditionals

English Grammar · B2

Third Conditional

Past conditionals

Third	Mixed
past → past	past → present
<i>If I'd studied, I'd have passed</i>	<i>If I'd saved, I'd be rich now</i>

Past conditionals: reference card grid

Third Conditional discusses the **past**—an **unreal** assumption and its hypothetical result.

Structure: If + , would have +

If I had studied, I would have passed.

If I had studied, I would have passed. (But I didn't study, and I didn't pass)

Note: It expresses a hypothesis **contrary to past facts**; often conveys regret or blame. Abbreviations: I'd have, would've.

Mixed Conditional

Mixed Conditional mixes different times. The most common type is: **Past cause** → **Present result**.

Structure: If + , would +

If I had saved money, I would be rich now.

If I had saved money, I would be rich now. (Past cause, present result)

Note: Use **would + base verb** in the main clause (referring to present), not would have (which refers to the past).

Conditional Summary

Comparing all four conditionals together:

- **Zero Conditional:** If + present, present. (Universal truths)
- **First Conditional:** If + present, will + base verb. (Real future)
- **Second Conditional:** If + past, would + base verb. (Unreal present)
- **Third Conditional:** If + past perfect, would have + past participle. (Unreal past)

If I were you, I would apologize.

If I were you, I would apologize. (Second conditional)

Note: Identify the **tense of the if-clause**: present / past / past perfect determines the conditional type.

Common Errors

- × ~~If I would have known, I would have come.~~ → ✓ If I **had known**, I would have come. — Never use would in the if-clause; this is the most frequent error in spoken English (especially influenced by American TV dramas).
- × ~~If I had studied, I would pass the exam yesterday.~~ → ✓ ...I **would have passed** the exam. — Past results require would have + past participle.
- Mixed conditionals are not “random mixing”: Only logical combinations like **past cause** → **present result** (If I had saved money, I would be rich **now**) work correctly.
- Decoding abbreviations: I'd followed by **have + past participle** → I'd = I would; I'd followed directly by a **past participle** → I'd = I had. *I'd have helped* (would) vs. *I'd finished* (had).