

# USE THE THIRD CONDITIONAL

## INTRODUCTION

The third conditional in English, also known as the type 3 conditional, is the conditional used to talk about past situations and how they might have been different depending on whether or not the condition was met.

We use the **third conditional** to talk about:

- **Imaginary situations in the past,**
- **Regrets or different results.**

Structure:

**If + had + past participle, would have + past participle**

Example:

If I had studied, I would have passed.

Last month, Sara failed her English exam. She is very sad now.

She says:

“If I **had studied** more, I **would have passed** the exam.

If I **had gone** to all the classes, I **would have understood** the grammar better.

I **wouldn't have failed** if I **had asked** the teacher for help.”

Now she has a plan:

“Next time, I will study every day.”

*If I had not left early that day, I would have seen him for the last time.*

*If she had studied more, she would have graduated*

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## Main uses:

- To say: "This did not happen, but it could have happened."
- To express regret or guilt: I should have..., I shouldn't have...
- To imagine a different outcome: If we had... we would have...

## VOCABULARY

### 1 Situations and problems

| Word / phrase       | Example                         |
|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| <b>exam / test</b>  | I failed my English exam.       |
| <b>grade / mark</b> | She got a bad grade.            |
| <b>mistake</b>      | It was a big mistake.           |
| <b>traffic</b>      | There was a lot of traffic.     |
| <b>deadline</b>     | He missed the deadline.         |
| <b>project</b>      | We didn't finish the project.   |
| <b>meeting</b>      | They were late for the meeting. |
| <b>opportunity</b>  | She lost a great opportunity.   |
| <b>problem</b>      | This created a problem.         |
| <b>solution</b>     | We found a solution.            |

### 2 Feelings and regrets

| Word / phrase              | Example                              |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>regret</b>              | I have a big regret about last year. |
| <b>to regret</b>           | I regret not studying more.          |
| <b>I'm sorry I...</b>      | I'm sorry I shouted at you.          |
| <b>I feel bad about...</b> | I feel bad about my behavior.        |
| <b>I wish I had...</b>     | I wish I had studied harder.         |
| <b>I wish I hadn't...</b>  | I wish I hadn't wasted my time.      |
| <b>lesson</b>              | I learned an important lesson.       |
| <b>consequence</b>         | There were serious consequences.     |
| <b>result</b>              | The result was terrible.             |
| <b>different outcome</b>   | We wanted a different outcome.       |

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3 Key grammar words for third conditional

| Word / expression     | Example                           |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| if                    | If I had known...                 |
| had + past participle | had studied, had gone, had called |
| would have            | would have passed                 |
| wouldn't have         | wouldn't have failed              |
| could have            | could have won                    |
| might have            | might have helped                 |
| should have           | should have tried                 |
| shouldn't have        | shouldn't have said that          |

## GRAMMAR

Like the other conditionals, the third conditional has two clauses: an "if" clause and the main clause, which describes the result of the past situation.

The "if" clause must be written in the past perfect tense, and the main clause must use the past participle. The order of the clauses doesn't matter, as long as you maintain the correct grammatical structure. Let's look at the structure in detail.

### Condition clause

The condition clause has the following structure:

**If + subject + past perfect**

### Result clause

The second clause is the result clause and is formed with:

**Subject + would + have + past participle**

### Third conditional in affirmative form

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The structure of the third conditional in the affirmative, as we already mentioned, must use the past perfect and the past participle.

## Structure:

**If + subject + had + past participle, subject + would have + past participle**

## Examples:

- *If I had studied more, I would have passed the exam.*
- *If you had left earlier, you would have arrived on time.*
- *If he had called her, she would have been happier.*
- *If we had checked the map, we would have found the place.*
- *If they had saved money, they would have bought a new car.*

## **Third conditional in negative form**

To form the negative third conditional, the negation must be included in both clauses by adding not after had (had not) or would (would not). The contractions hadn't and wouldn't can also be used.

Two possibilities:

Negative in the "if" part: hadn't + past participle

Negative in the "wouldn't have" part: + past participle

## Structure:

**If + subject + verb in negative past perfect, + complement, Subject + would/wouldn't + have + verb in past participle**

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## Examples:

- *If I hadn't eaten so much, I wouldn't have felt sick.*
- *If you hadn't forgotten the keys, we wouldn't have waited outside.*
- *If she hadn't spent all her money, she wouldn't have had problems.*
- *If we hadn't missed the bus, we wouldn't have been late.*
- *If they hadn't argued, they wouldn't have lost their friendship.*

## Third conditional in interrogative form

### Structure:

**If + subject + verb in past perfect, + complement, would + subject + have + verb in past participle +?**

### Examples:

- *What would you have done if you had failed the course?*
- *If you had had more time, would you have studied abroad?*
- *If he had won the competition, would he have moved to another city?*
- *If we had known about the problem, would we have helped them?*
- *If they had seen the message, would they have come to the meeting?*

## The third conditional with modal verbs

It's very common to use the modal verbs **could** or **might** in the third conditional.

When we want to express that something could happen but we're not 100% sure, we use the verb **might**.

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## Example:

She might have won the prize if she had done more preparation. (She could have easily won the prize if she had prepared more.)

When we want to say that something would have been possible under specific conditions, we use **could**.

## Example:

You could have saved more money if you had worked harder. (You could have saved more money if you had worked harder.)

As you can see, in both cases, the verb in the **if** clause is conjugated in the past perfect.

## Examples:

- *If I had studied more, I **could have got** a better grade.*
- *If she had left earlier, she **might have caught** the train.*
- *If they had invited me, I **might have gone** to the party.*
- *If we had worked together, we **could have finished** faster.*
- *If he had listened to you, he **shouldn't have made** that mistake.*
- *If you had told me the truth, I **might have forgiven** you.*
- *If they had checked the weather, they **could have avoided** the storm.*

## Differences between the second and third conditionals

Basically, the main difference between these two conditionals lies in the fact that the second conditional is used when the probability of something happening is low. The third conditional, as we have seen, is used to talk about the past in situations of regret.

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| Second Conditional                              | Third Conditional                                            |
|-------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| If + past simple + would/could                  | If + past perfect + past participle                          |
| If this had happened, that could have happened. | If this hadn't happened, this wouldn't have happened either. |

## Examples:

- If you had been rich, you would have bought a new house.
- If he had been taller, he would have played basketball.
- He wouldn't have been successful if it hadn't been for his education.
- If I hadn't been so busy, I would have gone out with you.
- Would you have helped me if I had needed it?
- Do you think the bank would have lent me money if I had requested it?

## CONVERSATION - IF I HAD KNOWN...

**Mia:** I missed the scholarship last year. I didn't send my application on time.

**Tom:** Really? That's sad. If you **had sent** it earlier, you **would have had** a good chance.

**Mia:** I know. If I **had checked** the deadline, I **wouldn't have missed** it.

**Tom:** Maybe you **could have studied** abroad if you **had got** the scholarship.

**Mia:** Yes, I **might have studied** in Canada. But I learned something.

**Tom:** What?

**Mia:** If I **had planned** better, things **would have been** different. Now I always check dates and details.

**Tom:** That's true. If we **hadn't made** mistakes in the past, we **wouldn't have learned** these lessons.

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