

First conditional

CEFR A2-B1 · 20 questions · A4 / US Letter

If plus the present simple, will plus the base verb: a real possibility in the future.

The rule

The form

- Pattern: if plus present simple, plus will plus the base verb. "If you hurry, we will catch the train."
- The two clauses can change places: "We will catch the train if you hurry." No comma when the main clause comes first.
- Negative: "If you do not hurry, we will miss the train."
- Question: "Will you come if I buy the tickets?"
- The if-clause never takes will in this pattern: "If you hurry", not "If you will hurry".

Real possibilities about the future

- Use the first conditional when the condition is possible and the result is in the future.
- "If the bus is late, I will call you." The bus may be late; the call is the plan.
- The condition can be likely, unlikely or fifty-fifty. The point is that the speaker treats it as real, not imaginary.
- For facts that are always true, use the zero conditional instead: "If you heat ice, it melts."

What can replace will in the result

- Can shows ability or permission: "If you finish early, you can go home."
- May or might shows a possible result: "If she calls, I may not answer."
- Going to shows a plan: "If we save enough, we are going to visit Japan."
- The imperative gives an instruction: "If you see Sam, ask him to call me."
- Should gives advice: "If you feel ill, you should rest."

Unless and if not

- Unless means if not: "Unless you hurry, we will miss the train."
- The unless-clause is positive in form even though the meaning is negative. Never add not after unless.
- You can also say "if... not": "If you do not hurry, we will miss the train."
- Both versions take the present simple in the condition clause.

If or when

- If suggests that the situation may or may not happen: "If I go to Paris, I will visit the Louvre."
- When suggests that the situation will definitely happen: "When I go to Paris, I will visit the Louvre."
- Both use the present simple for a future meaning.

- The comma rule is the same for both: comma after the condition clause, no comma when it comes second.

Questions

Write your answer on the line under each question. Check your work with the answer key on the last page.

1. If it ___ tomorrow, we will cancel the picnic.

2. If you study hard, you ___ the exam.

3. She will call you if she ___ any news.

4. Unless you hurry, we ___ the train.

5. If I ___ time, I will help you with the report.

6. If you do not water the plant, it ___ .

7. I will go to the party if I ___ work early.

8. If you see Sam, ___ him to call me.

9. We will stay inside if it ___ cold.

10. If she ___ the answer, she will tell us.

11. Unless we leave now, we ___ late.

12. If the bus arrives on time, we ___ the nine o'clock train.

13. What ___ you do if you lose your phone?

14. If you ___ the instructions, the app will work.

15. If you are tired, ___ a break.

16. Will you come if I ___ you a ticket?

17. If they ___ late, we will start without them.

18. She will not pass if she ___ harder.

19. If the weather ___ nice, we will have a picnic.

20. If he ___ his homework, he can watch TV.

Answer key

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1. **rains** — The if-clause of the first conditional takes the present simple: if it rains.
2. **will pass** — The result clause of the first conditional takes will plus the base verb: will pass.
3. **gets** — The if-clause stays in the present simple even when the sentence looks forward: if she gets.
4. **will miss** — Unless means if not, and the result clause takes will: we will miss the train.
5. **have** — The present simple have carries the future meaning in the if-clause.
6. **will die** — The real future result takes will: it will die.
7. **finish** — The if-clause takes the present simple: if I finish early.
8. **ask** — The result clause can be an imperative: ask him to call me.
9. **is** — A possible future condition takes the present simple: if it is cold.
10. **knows** — The if-clause uses the present simple knows for a real future possibility.
11. **will be** — Unless introduces a real condition, and the result uses will: we will be late.
12. **will catch** — The future result of a real condition takes will: will catch.
13. **will** — The first conditional question uses will in the main clause: What will you do?
14. **follow** — The if-clause takes the present simple: if you follow the instructions.
15. **take** — The result clause can be an imperative: take a break.
16. **buy** — The if-clause stays in the present simple: if I buy you a ticket.
17. **are** — A real future condition takes the present simple: if they are late.
18. **does not study** — The negative if-clause uses do or does plus not: if she does not study.
19. **is** — The present simple is carries the future meaning in the if-clause.
20. **finishes** — The if-clause takes the present simple, and can replaces will in the result: if he finishes.