

Mixed conditionals: past and present together

CEFR B2 · 20 questions · A4 / US Letter

When one half of a conditional looks at the past and the other at now, the sentence is mixed. The time words tell you which pattern you need.

The rule

Pattern 1: past condition, present result

- Form: if plus past perfect, then would plus base verb.
- Example: "If I had taken that job, I would live in Berlin now."
- The past action did not happen, so the present situation is imaginary.
- Time words in the result signal this pattern: now, today, at the moment.

Pattern 2: present condition, past result

- Form: if plus past simple, then would have plus past participle.
- Example: "If I were more organised, I would have finished the report yesterday."
- The present condition describes a general quality, and the past result did not happen.
- The past time word yesterday, last week or then signals this pattern.

How the mix is built

- Take the if-clause from one conditional and the result clause from another.
- Pattern 1 uses the third conditional if-clause and the second conditional result.
- Pattern 2 uses the second conditional if-clause and the third conditional result.
- Both patterns describe unreal situations, so the meaning is imaginary, not factual.

Mixed or standard?

- If both halves are about the past, use the third conditional: "If I had studied, I would have passed."
- If both halves are about now or the future, use the second: "If I studied more, I would pass."
- If one half moves in time, mix the forms and keep the meaning clear.
- An unreal past condition with a present result almost always needs a time word such as now to make the shift visible.

Modal verbs and negatives

- Would in the result can change to could or might: "If I had saved more, I could travel now."
- The negative goes in the usual place: "If she had not missed the train, she would be here."
- Were is standard for all subjects in the second conditional if-clause: "If he were taller, he would have played basketball."

- Contractions are common in speech: "If I had known, I would have called."

Questions

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

1. If I had studied medicine, I ___ a doctor now.

2. If she had caught the early train, she ___ in London now.

3. If I ___ more patient, I would have waited for the answer.

4. If he were a better driver, he ___ the car.

5. If we had left earlier, we ___ in this queue now.

6. If I had saved more money, I ___ travel today.

7. If the team were stronger, they ___ the final.

8. If she ___ the bus, she would be at the meeting now.

9. If I did not work on Saturdays, I ___ to your party.

10. If the weather had been better, the flowers ___ healthier now.

11. If I had learned to swim, I ___ join you at the lake now.

12. If you had told me earlier, I ___ differently.

13. If he ___ taller, he would have played basketball.

14. If I had taken that job, I ___ in Berlin now.

15. If we had bought the house, we ___ so much rent now.

16. If I were you, I ___ for the job yesterday.

17. If the alarm had worked, the fire ___ less damage now.

18. If I had known the answer, I ___ you.

19. If she were not so shy, she ___ more friends last year.

20. If I had followed the recipe, the cake ___ better now.

Answer key

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1. **would be** — Pattern 1 of the mixed conditional: a past condition with a present result takes would plus the base verb.
2. **would be** — Now signals a present result, so the mixed conditional uses would be after the past condition.
3. **were** — The general present condition in a mixed conditional takes if plus the past simple, and be uses were.
4. **would not have crashed** — The past result needs would have plus the past participle, making this pattern 2 of the mixed conditional.
5. **would not be standing** — A past condition with a present result takes would be plus -ing for an ongoing situation.
6. **could** — Could can replace would in the present result of a mixed conditional.
7. **might have won** — The past result after a general present condition uses might have plus the past participle.
8. **had not missed** — A past condition in a mixed conditional takes the past perfect: had not missed.
9. **would have come** — The present routine condition takes a past result in this pattern 2 mixed conditional.
10. **would look** — Now shows the present result, so the mixed conditional uses would look.
11. **could** — Could plus the base verb expresses the present possibility in a mixed conditional.
12. **would have acted** — Earlier is a past time, so the result in this conditional is past: would have acted.
13. **were** — A general present condition takes if plus the past simple, so were is correct in this mixed conditional.
14. **would live** — The past condition with the present time word now takes would live.
15. **would not be paying** — The present ongoing result takes would not be paying in this mixed conditional.
16. **would have applied** — Yesterday signals a past result after the general condition, so the mixed conditional uses would have applied.
17. **would cause** — The past condition pairs with a present result, so would cause is correct.
18. **would have told** — The result is in the past, so the third conditional form would have told is needed.
19. **would have made** — A general present condition with a past result takes would have plus the past participle.
20. **would taste** — Now makes the result present, so the mixed conditional uses would taste after the past condition.