
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Grammar

Conditionals review



This is not a word-for-word transcript

Callum

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute Grammar with me, Callum

Finn

And me, Finn

Callum

So Finn, what is our topic today?

Finn

I don't know.

Callum

Haven't you read the script?

Finn

No, when I come to the studio, I read the script, not before.

Callum

If you had read the script, you would know what it's about.

Finn

Well if you give me a few minutes, I'll just give it a quick read.

Callum

I'd love to give you a few minutes if we had the time. But this is 6 Minute Grammar, not 16 Minute Grammar.

Finn

If I'd known you were going to be so bossy, I'd've stayed in bed.

Callum

Mmm. So what is today's topic? If you've been paying attention, you might have worked it out.

Finn

We've had a lot of 'ifs', that is a bit of a clue.

Callum

It is indeed. Today we're reviewing conditionals.

Finn

Conditional sentences connect two things. One thing follows on from something else.

Callum

Conditional sentences generally have two parts, the **conditional clause**, which is sometimes called the **if clause**, and a **main clause**. The **if clause** states a condition and the **main clause** has what happens because of that condition.

Finn

And there are different kinds of conditional structures depending on whether we're dealing with something in the present or past and if we're talking about something real or imagined.

Callum

We normally talk about four different conditional structures. The first one is called the zero conditional. Here's an example from earlier. Let's wind back a bit.

[sfx: tape rewinding]

Finn

When I come to the studio, I read the script.

Callum

Now Finn, what time does that refer to?

Finn

It's not really past, present or future, is it? It's timeless. It's always.

Callum

And this is what the zero conditional is for. Things that are always true, things that always happen. One thing happens, something else follows.

Finn

It's also commonly used for general truths and facts. Like in these examples.

Feifei

When you heat water enough, it boils.

If you leave milk out long enough, it goes bad.

Callum

And in zero conditionals, **when** and **if** have the same meaning. Let's move on now to the first conditional.

[sfx: tape rewinding]

Finn

Well if you give me a few minutes, I'll just give it a quick read.

Callum

Finn, what time does this refer to?

Finn

This one is about something that might happen in the future. I'll read the script.

Callum

Will that definitely happen?

Finn

No, it'll only happen after a particular condition is met, and that condition is that you give me enough time.

Callum

With the first conditional, you can use **when** as well as **if** but unlike the zero conditional, they do have different meanings. Listen to these examples.

Feifei

If I go to the shops, I'll get some bread.

When I go to the shops, I'll get some bread.

Callum

So Finn: "If I go to the shops". Am I definitely going to the shops?

Finn

No, not this time. It's a possibility, but not definite.

Callum

And what about: "When I go to the shops"?

Finn

In this one, using **when**, there is a definite plan to go to the shops.

Callum

So the first conditional expresses a likely result of a possible or definite future condition.

IDENT

You're listening to BBC Learning English.

Callum

Today we're reviewing different conditional forms.

Finn

We've looked at zero and first conditionals, and it was Callum who gave us an example of the second conditional.

[sfx: tape rewinding]

Callum

I'd love to give you a few minutes if we had the time.

Finn

What time does this refer to, Callum?

Callum

It's an imaginary present time – do we have the time now? No we don't. It's making a prediction about something that could be possible if something in the present were different. We're imagining a different present reality.

Finn

Wow. That's very sci-fi, Callum!

Callum

And now the third conditional. Let's go back again and here the example.

[sfx: tape rewinding]

Finn

If I'd known you were going to be so bossy, I'd've stayed in bed.

Callum

Finn, what time are we talking about here?

Finn

We're talking about the past, but something that didn't happen in the past.

Callum

Yes, you didn't know when you got up this morning that I was going to be so bossy.

Finn

No, my past action would have been different, if I had known. I would have stayed in bed!

Callum

So with the third conditional were imagining a different past reality.

Finn

Very good. That's right. Very sci-fi again Callum.

Callum

Now, just time for a quick quiz. You're going to hear a sentence and you need to work out whether it's a zero, first, second or third conditional. Here's the first one:

Finn

If you drop the price, you'll sell more.

Callum

That's first conditional. Here's the next one:

Finn

If I were you, I'd take the job.

Callum

And that one is second conditional. What about this one?

Finn

When I've had a busy day, I want some peace and quiet when I get home.

Callum

Did you get it? That was the zero conditional.

Finn

Well done if you got all of those right.

Callum

If we had more time we could tell you a lot more about conditionals.

Finn

But we don't, so we're going to say goodbye for now, and remind you that there's more about this topic on our website bbclearningenglish.com. Do join us again soon for more 6 Minute Grammar.

Both

Bye.