

The conditional tense

16

TENSE	Conditional
TIME	Refers to the hypothetical future
KEY PHRASES	"Would"
STRUCTURE	Simple tense: VERB INFINITIVE + VERB ENDING

The conditional tense expresses the feeling of future uncertainty, generally translated as English "would" + VERB. It differs from the future tense, which expresses future certainty ("He *will be* here"), in that it suggests probability or possibility if some condition were met: "He *would be* here (but he's sick)" or "He *would be* here (if he weren't so busy)."

The inherent feature of the conditional tense is that some condition is *not* being met, but that *if* it were met, a certain action *would* take place. Sometimes this condition is stated, as in the following examples.

He would play pro basketball if he were taller.
Would you call me if I gave you my number?
I would eat in that restaurant, but it's too expensive.
I would call her, but she was rude at the party.

Note that there is often a phrase beginning with "but" or "if" to explain the reason that the action would (or would not) be completed in a sentence using the conditional tense. At times this reason is not stated explicitly, but is implied or simply understood, as in the following examples.

I would go. (if I were you)
They wouldn't sing this song. (because the lyrics are stupid)
They would spend the money. (but you hid it)

Note that in sentences that use the conditional tense followed by a hypothetical *if*-clause (for example, "if I were," "if you had," "if we saw"), use of the subjunctive is required after the *if*-clause. Because we have not yet covered the subjunctive, none of the examples or exercises in this chapter will include sentences containing a hypothetical *if*-clause.

Regular verbs in the conditional

Most verbs are regular in the conditional tense. In fact, the future and the conditional tenses share the same irregular verbs. For conditional forms of regular verbs, the infinitive itself is the stem and the appropriate tense ending is added to the infinitive. Below are the verb endings for the conditional tense.

-ía	-íamos
-ías	-íais
-ía	-ían

Below are the full conjugations of **hablar**, **comer**, and **vivir** in the conditional tense. Note that all three verbs use the same verb endings.

hablar to speak, talk

hablaría	hablaríamos
hablarías	hablaríais
hablaría	hablarían

comer to eat

comería	comeríamos
comerías	comeríais
comería	comerían

vivir to live

viviría	viviríamos
vivirías	viviríais
viviría	vivirían

Yo compraría el vestido, pero no tengo suficiente dinero.

¿Cuándo **iríamos**?

¿**Comerías** en ese restaurante?

Estaríais allí a las diez, pero tenéis que estudiar.

Nadie dormiría allí.

Ellos no cantarían esta canción.

***I would buy** the dress, but I don't have enough money.*

When would we go?

***Would you eat** in that restaurant?*

***You all would be** there at ten, but you have to study.*

***No one would sleep** there.*

***They wouldn't sing** this song.*

EJERCICIO

Place an X by all the things you would do if you won \$100,000,000 in a lottery.

1. ____ Renunciaría al trabajo.
2. ____ Daría parte del dinero a los pobres.
3. ____ Viajaría por el mundo.
4. ____ Depositaría todo el dinero en el banco.
5. ____ Me mudaría a una casa enorme y muy elegante.
6. ____ Compraría regalos para mi familia y todos mis amigos.
7. ____ Celebraría el premio con mis amigos en un buen restaurante y pagaría por todos.
8. ____ Compraría un coche nuevo.
9. ____ Escribiría un libro sobre mi vida.
10. ____ No cambiaría ningún aspecto de mi vida.

Traducción

1. *I would eat the cookies, but I'm on a diet (estar a dieta).*

2. *Would she marry (casarse con) John?*

3. *Where would you go?*

4. *They [m.] wouldn't live in that house, because it's haunted (embrujado).*

5. *Would you all [formal] deliver (entregar) the newspapers to our house?*

6. *If I teach this class, you all would be my students.*

7. *I'm not going to give them the money, because they would lose it.*

8. *We would change the words of the song, but it would be too difficult.*

9. *I'd get up, but my leg is sore.*

10. *I know they would give you the money that you need.*

11. *Would you buy a used car from this man?*

12. *Who would think such a thing (tal cosa)?*

13. *Why wouldn't he shave (afeitarse) with that razor (la navaja)?*

14. *Why would anybody read this?*

15. *I wouldn't play the piano in front of a crowd (la multitud).*

Irregular verbs in the conditional

The twelve verbs that are irregular in the future are also irregular in the conditional, and in the same way. The verb endings are regular (-ía, -ías, -ía, -íamos, -íais, -ían), but each of these twelve verbs shows a change in the stem. They are grouped to make learning them easier, because there are patterns to how the infinitive stem changes.

Below are the twelve irregular verbs in the conditional tense, shown in three groups. The infinitive of each one appears with its first-person singular (yo) form in the conditional tense.

VOCABULARIO

Group 1

The infinitive stem drops the final vowel of its ending; the conditional tense verb ending is added to the modified stem.

caber	to fit, have enough room	yo cabría
haber	to have (<i>auxiliary</i>)	yo habría
poder	to be able to	yo podría
querer	to want	yo querría
saber	to know a fact, know how	yo sabría

Group 2

The infinitive stem drops the final vowel of its ending and replaces it with the letter d; the conditional tense verb ending is added to the modified stem.

poner	to put, place	yo pondría
salir	to leave	yo saldría
tener	to have, hold	yo tendría
valer	to be worth	yo valdría
venir	to come	yo vendría

Group 3

The infinitive stem is shortened; the conditional tense verb ending is added to the modified stem.

decir	to say, tell	yo diría
hacer	to do, make, make out (<i>a check</i>)	yo haría

Yo le **diría** a Timotea cualquier cosa.

¿Qué **haríamos**?

¿Cuándo **saldrías**?

Sabríais sus nombres.

Nuestro sofá **no cabría** en ese cuarto.

Estos anillos **no valdrían** nada.

I would tell Timothy anything.

What would we do?

When would you leave?

You all would know their names.

Our sofa wouldn't fit in that room.

These rings wouldn't be worth anything.

Compounds of irregular verbs

Some of the irregular verbs in the conditional have compounds that are irregular in the same way. For example, the first-person singular (yo) form of **tener** ("to have") in the conditional tense is **tendría**, and for **obtener** ("to obtain, get") it is **obtendría**.

Yo **tendría** empleo.

Yo **obtendría** empleo.

Él **haría** la tarea.

Él **reharía** la tarea.

I would have work.

I would get work.

He would do the assignment.

He would redo the assignment.

Below are several common compounds of irregular verbs in the conditional, shown as the infinitive together with the first-person singular (**yo**) form in the conditional tense.

VOCABULARIO

abstenerse de + INFINITIVE	to abstain from (doing something)	me abstendría de + INFINITIVE
atenerse a	to depend on, rely on	me atendería a
componer	to compose	compondría
contener	to contain, hold	contendría
convenir en + INFINITIVE	to agree to (do something)	convendría en + INFINITIVE
deshacer	to undo, untie (<i>a knot</i>)	desharía
detener	to detain, stop, arrest	detendría
mantener	to maintain	mantendría
obtener	to obtain, get	obtendría
oponerse	to oppose	me opondría
ponerse	to become, put on (<i>clothing</i>), set (<i>sun</i>)	me pondría
rehacer	to redo, remake	reharía
sostener	to sustain, support, uphold	sostendría
suponer	to suppose, assume	supondría

An exception to this pattern is **bendecir** ("to bless"). The verb **decir** is one of the twelve irregular verbs in the conditional, with a modified stem (**dir-**). The verb **bendecir** does not share that irregularity. **Bendecir** is regular in the conditional tense.

El sacerdote te **diría**.

The priest would tell you.

El sacerdote te **bendeciría**.

The priest would bless you.

Habría—hay in the conditional

The third-person singular of **haber** in the conditional, **habría**, is the conditional form of **hay** ("there is," "there are"). When used alone, **habría** translates as "there would be" and is used for both singular and plural.

Habría más dinero aquí, pero fuimos al casino.

There would be more money here, but we went to the casino.

Juan perdió cinco libros; de otra manera, **habría** treinta en el estante.

John lost five books; otherwise, there would be thirty on the shelf.

NOTE **Habría** can also be used as an auxiliary verb; in that context, it is always used before a past participle rather than alone. This use of **habría** will be covered in Chapter 23, The conditional perfect tense.

EJERCICIO

16.2

Complete each of the following sentences with the correct conditional form of the verb in parentheses.

- Yo _____ (poner) estos libros en ese estante.
- Tú _____ (poder) tocar el violín, pero nunca lo practicas.
- Juan _____ (tener) una fiesta, pero no es su cumpleaños.

4. Esta pulsera _____ (valer) mucho, pero no es de oro.
5. ¿Qué _____ (hacer) Sherlock Holmes en esta situación?
6. Estas sillas _____ (caber) en la sala, pero no en el dormitorio.
7. Nosotros _____ (venir) a su fiesta, pero estamos enfermos.
8. _____ (haber) mucha comida, pero Juan estaba aquí anoche y se comió todo.
9. ¿Qué _____ (decir) tú en esta situación?
10. Yo no _____ (decir) nada.

EJERCICIO

16.3

Traducción

1. *I would come to your party, but I'm sick.*

2. *Where would you put these chairs?*

3. *This bracelet would be worth more, but it's broken.*

4. *What would you all say to that man?*

5. *We would have the reception in our house, but there isn't enough room.*

6. *Do you think that Robert would know the answer?*

7. *Who would be able to do such a thing?*

8. *I would want the car, but it isn't my choice.*

9. *There would be two dozen eggs in the refrigerator, but we ate four for breakfast.*

10. *Would these plates fit into the cabinet?*

11. *What would you do during a hurricane?*

12. *I wouldn't tell him, because he can't keep a secret (guardar un secreto).*

13. *We would make out the check, but there isn't enough (suficiente) money in the bank.*

14. *I'm not going to give these shoes to Marcos, because I know that he wouldn't be able to wear them.*

15. *I would put the flowers in front of the house, not in back.*

EJERCICIO

16.4

Traducción

VOCABULARIO	conceder	to grant	el peso	weight
	el cuento de hadas	fairy tale	la pobreza	poverty
	el deseo	wish	por eso	therefore
	la guerra	war	preocuparse por	to worry about
	pedir	to request, ask for	sufrir	to suffer
	el personaje	character	la tristeza	sadness

When I was young, I loved to read fairy tales. One of my favorite characters was Aladdin, because he was always granting people their fantasies in the form of three wishes. What would I do? First, I would ask him for a million wishes, but I know that he wouldn't do that. Therefore, these are my three wishes: 1. My cat would be able to speak, and she and I would have long conversations. 2. I would never have to worry about my weight. And the most important wish is this (one): 3. No one in the world would suffer another minute: There would be no war, there would be no hunger, there would be no poverty, there would be no sadness.

