

# 3rd Conditional

We use the third conditional to imagine a different past.

*If I had done my homework, my teacher wouldn't have shouted at me.  
(In reality, I didn't do my homework, and my teacher shouted at me. So we are imagining a different past)*

*She would have passed her exam if she had studied more.  
(In reality she didn't study enough, and so she didn't pass her exam. So we are imagining a different past)*

## important points!

We can use other modal verbs in place of would.

*If they'd come earlier, they could have got a seat.  
(In reality, they didn't come early, and they didn't get a seat. In our different past, there was a possibility of a seat)*

## Uses the past perfect tense:

### Formation

(IF Clause)

(Main Clause)

If I had worked harder,	I would have passed my exam.
If I had worked harder,	I could have passed my exam.
If I had worked harder,	I should have passed my exam.

or...

(Main Clause)

(IF Clause)

I would have passed my exam	if I had worked harder.
I could have passed my exam	if I had worked harder.
I should have passed my exam	if I had worked harder.

Note! We never use would have, or wouldn't have etc in the *if* clause.

For example:

*If I hadn't helped you, you would have failed. = You would have failed, if I hadn't helped you.  
(I helped you so you didn't fail).*

*If it had been sunny, we could have gone out. = We could have gone out, if it had been.  
(We didn't go out because it wasn't sunny).*

## would've / might've

Note that if we want to introduce the idea of possibility into our assertion in the main clause, **might've done** can be used as an alternative to **would've done**.

*It's fortunate that you spend so much time looking out of your front room window. If you hadn't been looking out the window just then, you **might not have** seen the crime being committed.*

*It's a pity you weren't wearing your glasses. If you had been wearing them, you **might've** noticed that it was a bull, not a cow, that was charging towards us.*

**would've / could've**

Similarly, if we want to talk about abilities / possibilities rather than certainties, we can use **could've done** instead of **would've done** in the main clause. Compare the way ability / possibility contrasts with certainty in these examples:

*I am an adopted and unhappy child. I often think that if my real mother had kept me, I **could've danced** in the street to earn money for us both.*

*My dancing feet would have softened the hearts of the passers-by and they **would've thrown** money into the hat in front of us.*

**PRACTICE**

**Using the words in parentheses, complete the text below with the appropriate conditional form.**

**Text 1**

After I graduated from university, I applied for a marketing position with a prominent bank with branches all over the world. I didn't get the job because they wanted someone who spoke Spanish fluently. I 1. \_\_\_\_\_ (could, take) Spanish in high school, but I didn't. I took an acting class instead. If I 2. \_\_\_\_\_ (take) Spanish, I 3. \_\_\_\_\_ (get) the job. Just imagine, if I had actually gotten the job, I 4. \_\_\_\_\_ (move) to Spain. My entire life 5. \_\_\_\_\_ (could, go) in a totally different direction. If I had accepted the job and moved to Spain, I 6. \_\_\_\_\_ (might, meet) a Spanish woman and 7. \_\_\_\_\_ (get) married. If that had actually happened, I probably 8. \_\_\_\_\_ (stay) in Spain. We 9. \_\_\_\_\_ (might, have) children. Unfortunately, I didn't get the job and I didn't go to Spain. I got a boring job and I live alone. If I had just taken Spanish, my life 10. \_\_\_\_\_ (be) much more interesting.

**Text 2**

Clarence: Mary, have you ever had a teacher who changed your life or influenced you greatly?

Mary: Yes. But the teacher influenced me in a very negative way. I have always had problems with math, and I think it comes from my seventh grade math teacher, Mr. Harris. He thought girls couldn't do math. When any girl 1. \_\_\_\_\_ (ask) a question, he always 2. \_\_\_\_\_ (sigh) and 3. \_\_\_\_\_ (say) , "Girls can't do math. It's a well-known fact." When a boy 4. \_\_\_\_\_ (ask) a question, he 5. \_\_\_\_\_ (smile) and 6. \_\_\_\_\_ (ask) for his answer.

Clarence: That's terrible! Your teacher actually said that to you?

Mary: Yes. If he ever did let me answer a question, and I actually got it right, he always 7. \_\_\_\_\_ (say) that it was a lucky guess.

Clarence: Your parents 8. \_\_\_\_\_ (should, do) something about him. They 9. \_\_\_\_\_ (could, go) to the principle of the school and complained about the way Mr. Harris treated the girls. If you 10. \_\_\_\_\_ (be) my child, I 11. \_\_\_\_\_ (demand) that such an irresponsible teacher be fired.

Mary: You're right! If somebody 12. \_\_\_\_\_ (force) Mr. Harris to treat the children equally, I 13. \_\_\_\_\_ (become) more confident in math. His behaviour 14. \_\_\_\_\_ (might, affect) every girl in that class.

Clarence: It might have. I'm glad our children don't have teachers like that!

**Texts 3**

1.a. She will take care of the children for us next weekend because her business trip was cancelled.

1.b. But, she 1. \_\_\_\_\_ (take, not) care of the children for us next weekend if her business trip 2. \_\_\_\_\_ (be, not) cancelled.

2.a. Tom is not going to come to dinner tomorrow because you insulted him yesterday.

2.b. But, he 3. \_\_\_\_\_ (come) if you \_\_\_\_\_ (insult) him.

3.a. Marie is unhappy because she gave up her career when she got married.

3.b. But, Marie 4. \_\_\_\_\_ (be) happy if she 5. \_\_\_\_\_ (give, not) up her career when she got married.

4.a. Dr. Mercer decided not to accept the research grant at Harvard because he is going to take six months off to spend more time with his family.

4.b. But, Dr. Mercer 6. \_\_\_\_\_ (accept) the research grant at Harvard if he \_\_\_\_\_ (take, not) six months off to spend more time with his family.

5.a. Professor Schmitz talked so much about the Maasai tribe because she is an expert on African tribal groups.

5.b. But, Professor Schmitz \_\_\_\_\_ (talk, not) so much about the Maasai tribe if she 7. \_\_\_\_\_ (be, not) an expert on African tribal groups.

6.a. I am unemployed because I had a disagreement with my boss and I was fired.

6.b. But, I \_\_\_\_\_ (be, not) unemployed if I 8. \_\_\_\_\_ (have, not) a disagreement with my boss and I 9. \_\_\_\_\_ (be, not) fired.

7.a. Nicole speaks Chinese fluently because she lived in China for ten years.

7.b. But, Nicole 10. \_\_\_\_\_ (speak, not) Chinese fluently if she 11. \_\_\_\_\_ (live, not) in China for ten years.

8.a. I will not help you study for your test because you have spent the last two weeks partying and wasting time.

8.b. But, I 12. \_\_\_\_\_ (help) you study for your test if you 13. \_\_\_\_\_ (spend, not) the last two weeks partying and wasting time.

9.a. Eleanor and Ben are not going skiing with us this year because Eleanor just had a baby.

9.b. But, Eleanor and Ben 14. \_\_\_\_\_ (go) skiing with us this year if Eleanor 15. \_\_\_\_\_ (have, not, just) a baby.

10.a. I am completely exhausted, so I will not go with you to the movies tonight.

10.b. But, if I 16. \_\_\_\_\_ (be, not) completely exhausted, I 17. \_\_\_\_\_ (go) with you to the movies tonight.

**Text 1**

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