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**The third conditional** (also called *conditional type 3*) is a structure used for talking about *unreal situations in the past*. This is the way we imagine how things could have been different in the past.

## When to use the third conditional

We use the third conditional to talk about:

1. Things that *did not happen*;
2. Situations like *dreams* or *wishes* with no possibility of coming true.
  - *If I'd known, I would have worn something nicer.*
  - *He wouldn't have missed the bus if he hadn't overslept.*

When we use the third conditional, we are talking about an impossible past condition. The condition was not and *cannot ever be true* because it is over and in the past. This also means the result is impossible because the *condition is impossible*.

## How to form the third conditional

The third conditional contains:

1. An 'if'/condition clause
2. A main/result clause

The third conditional uses the [Past Perfect](#) in the 'if' clause and the [Past Participle](#) in the result clause.



via <https://www.test-english.com/web18/level/b1/>

- *If she **had won** the lottery, ('if'/condition clause) + she **would have bought** a new house. (result clause)*
- *I **would have told** her about it (result clause) + if I **had known**. ('if'/condition clause)*

Just like the [second conditional](#), the 'if'/condition clause has a *comma* at the end if it comes *first*. There is no comma if the 'if'/condition clause comes second, after the result clause.

- I *would have done* better on the test if I *had studied* harder. (no comma needed because the "if" clause comes second)
- If you *had tried* harder, you *would have won*. (a comma comes after the "if" clause when it is first)

We can make positive, negative, and interrogative sentences using the third conditional. We can also use '*should have*', '*could have*', and '*might have*' with [modals](#).

- *If we had worked* better as a team, we *might have won* the tournament.
- You *could have bought* that toy if you *had saved* your money.
- *If it had rained* yesterday, what *would you have done*?
- Your day *would have been* better if you *had not stayed* up all night playing games.

We can also use the *contracted form* in each clause.

- You ***could've*** bought that computer if ***you'd*** saved your money.
- If ***she'd*** tried harder, ***she'd*** have done better.
- If you ***hadn't*** slept in, you ***wouldn't*** have missed your flight.

Let's summarize different types of conditional sentences:

	<b>If-clause</b> <i>(condition)</i>	<b>Main clause</b> <i>(result)</i>
<b>Zero Conditional</b> - used for <b>present</b> , <b>real/factual</b> situations	If I <b>drink</b> coffee at night,	I <b>don't sleep</b> well.
<b>First Conditional</b> - used for <b>future</b> <b>real/factual</b> situations	If I <b>drink</b> coffee tonight,	I <b>won't sleep</b> well.
<b>Second Conditional</b> - used for present or <b>future unreal</b> , imaginary situations	If I <b>drank</b> coffee tonight,	I <b>wouldn't sleep</b> well.
<b>Third Conditional</b> - used for <b>past unreal</b> , imaginary situations	If I <b>had drunk</b> coffee last night,	I <b>wouldn't have slept</b> well.

via

[https://www2.estrellamountain.edu/faculty/stonebrink/ESL040/4\\_types\\_of\\_conditionals.htm](https://www2.estrellamountain.edu/faculty/stonebrink/ESL040/4_types_of_conditionals.htm)

Here's a good video from Learn English on Skype explaining when and how to use the third conditional:

Read more on conditionals:

[Zero and First Conditionals](#)

[The Second Conditional](#)

[Mixed Conditionals](#)