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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute Grammar

### The second conditional



*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Rob**

Hello. Welcome to 6 Minute Grammar with me, Rob.

**Catherine**

And me, Catherine. Hello. This programme is all about the second conditional.

**Rob**

Yes the second conditional. We'll see how to form it...

**Catherine**

We'll look at why and when we use it....

**Rob**

There'll be a very helpful pronunciation tip...

**Catherine**

And there'll be a second conditional quiz at the end of the show, so listen carefully!

**Rob**

Let's start by looking at why and when we use the second conditional. The main use of the second conditional is to talk about impossible, unlikely or imaginary situations. And here's an example to do with \*\*\*\*\*. Catherine, are you a \*\*\*\*\* fan?

**Catherine**

Err... I like to watch the big games, the internationals, the England games in particular – I do like an England game.

**Rob**

Yes, they haven't won for a long time...

**Catherine**

Not since '66, I think...

**Rob**

'66 was a long time ago, but maybe they'll win one day...

**Catherine**

Maybe!

**Rob**

But at the moment it's just a dream; not a strong possibility. So Mike's here: let's have a second conditional sentence about that situation Mike:

**Mike**

If England won the World Cup, Catherine would be so happy.

**Rob**

If England \*\*\*\*\* the World Cup, Catherine \*\*\*\*\* be so happy. Catherine, is that true?

**Catherine**

It is, actually, I'd be very happy. \*\*\*\*\*, but, I'd be happy. So: this is a second conditional sentence and it is made of two parts. The first part starts with the word **if**, plus **a subject** and **a past simple verb**, and it describes an \*\*\*\*\* or \*\*\*\*\* situation, like this:

**Mike**

If England \*\*\*\*\* the World Cup...

**Catherine**

Thanks Mike. And the second part of the sentence has the word \*\*\*\*\* or the negative **wouldn't** with **an infinitive verb**. It describes a possible \*\*\*\*\* of the unlikely or imaginary situation.

**Mike**

...Catherine would be so happy.

**Rob**

That's the result of the \*\*\*\*\* situation. And yes, If England won the World Cup, we would be very happy, wouldn't we, Catherine?

**Catherine**

We would!

**Rob**

Good. Now, we can change the order of the two parts, and the meaning stays the same:

**Mike**

We'd be so happy if England \*\*\*\*\* the World Cup.

**Catherine**

Right, thanks Mike. Let's have some more examples.

**Mike**

If Sunny \*\*\*\*\* more money, he'd get a better phone.

I \*\*\*\*\* see you very often if I \*\*\*\*\* in the city.

Maria \*\*\*\*\* have a better job if she \*\*\*\*\* more English.

If I \*\*\*\*\* you, I'd take a holiday.

**Rob**

Thanks: lots of examples there. And the last one is particularly interesting: **If I were you, I'd take a holiday**. And of course this isn't a real situation, because I can't be you, can I?

**Catherine**

You can't be anybody Rob, except yourself, just you: we're stuck with you.

**Rob**

You're stuck with me, yes: I'm afraid so. Anyway, we say a second conditional sentence starting with the words **If I were you** when we want to give someone some advice. And here the \*\*\*\*\* is to go on holiday.

**Catherine**

It's interesting that a lot of native speakers say **If I were you**, and not if **I was you**.

**Rob**

And if I \*\*\*\*\* you, I'd go somewhere nice and hot with palm trees and sandy beaches. Mmm.

**IDENT**

6 Minute Grammar, from BBC Learning English.

**Rob**

And we're talking about second conditionals.

**Catherine**

Now for a word about pronunciation. Contractions or short forms – are very common in second conditionals – but they can sometimes be difficult to hear.

**Rob**

Yes, that's a good point. In the last example, the two words **I** and **would** become **I'd**. **I'd** take a holiday.

**Catherine**

So **would** is shortened to just a /d/ sound. Listen out for the short /d/ sound in this next example:

**Mike**

If I \*\*\*\*\* the answer, **I'd** tell you.

**Catherine**

Yes, the phrase **I \*\*\*\*\* tell** becomes **I'd tell**. One more time please Mike:

**Mike**

If I knew the answer, **I'd tell** you.

**Rob**

Well, wherever you are, I hope you know the answers to the quiz. It's coming up next!

**Catherine**

Yes, it's quiz time! Choose the correct word or phrase to fill each gap. Here's the first one. If you [beep] some money on the street, what would you do? Is the missing word a) find b) found or c) would find?

**Rob**

And the answer is b): If you \*\*\*\*\* £50 on the street, what would you do?

**Catherine**

Another one: If you forgot your wife's birthday what [beep] she do? Is it a) does, b) will or c) would?

**Rob**

So the answer is c): If you forgot your wife's birthday what \*\*\*\*\* she do? I wonder what she'd do...

**Catherine**

And the last one: I wouldn't eat that if I [beep] you. Is it a) am b) were or c) be?

**Rob**

And its b): I wouldn't eat that if I \*\*\*\*\* you. Well done if you got all those right.

**Rob**

Great. So we've been talking about the second conditional. It's made of **if** plus **the** \*\*\*\*\* tense, and \*\*\*\*\* plus **the** \*\*\*\*\* . We use it to talk about \*\*\*\*\* situations and their \*\*\*\*\* .

**Catherine**

There's more about this on our website at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Join us again soon for more 6 Minute Grammar.

**Both:**

Bye.

**STING**