

UNIT 36 If sentences (present/future)

a) Compare these examples:

Tom: I think I left my lighter in your house. Have you seen it?

Ann: No, but I'll have a look. **If I find** it, I'll give it to you.

In this example there is a real possibility that Ann will find the lighter. So she says: 'If I find ... I'll ...' (see also Unit 9c).

Ann: **If I found** £100 in the street, I would keep it.

This is a different type of situation. Ann is not thinking about a real possibility; she is imagining the situation. So she says: 'If I **found** ... I **would** ...' (*not* 'If I find ... I'll').

When you imagine a future happening like this, you use a *past* tense (*did/was/found* etc.) after *if*. But the meaning is *not* past:

- What would you do if you **won** a million pounds?
- If we **didn't go** to their party next week, they would be very angry.
- Ann **wouldn't** lend me any money if I asked her.

b) We do not normally use **would** in the *if* part of the sentence:

- I'd be very frightened **if** someone **pointed** a gun at me. (*not* 'if someone would point')
- **If** we **didn't go** to their party next week, they would be angry. (*not* 'if we wouldn't go')

Sometimes it is possible to say *if ... would*, especially when you ask someone to do something in a formal way:

- I would be very grateful **if** you **would** send me your brochure and price list as soon as possible. (*from a formal letter*)
- 'Shall I close the door?' 'Yes, please, **if** you **would**.'

c) In the other part of the sentence (not the *if* part) we use **would/wouldn't**. **Would** is often shortened to 'd, especially in spoken English:

- If you stopped smoking, you'd probably feel healthier.
- They **wouldn't** come to the party if you invited them.

You can also use **could** and **might**:

- They **might** be angry if I didn't visit them. (= perhaps they would be)
- If it stopped raining, we **could** go out. (= we would be able to go out)

d) Do not use **when** in sentences like the ones in this unit:

- Tom would be angry **if** I didn't visit him. (*not* 'when I didn't visit')
- What would you do **if** you were bitten by a snake? (*not* 'when you were')

See also Unit 9c.

For *if* sentences see also Units 37 and 38.

UNIT 36 Exercises

36.1 In this exercise you have to put the verb into the correct form.

Examples: If I found £100 in the street, I would keep (keep) it.
They'd be rather angry if you didn't visit (not/visit) them.

- 1 If I was offered the job, I think I (take) it.
- 2 I'm sure Tom will lend you some money. I would be very surprised if he (refuse).
- 3 Many people would be out of work if that factory (close) down.
- 4 If she sold her car, she (not/get) much money for it.
- 5 They're expecting us. They would be disappointed if we (not/come).
- 6 Would George be angry if I (take) his bicycle without asking?
- 7 Ann gave me this ring. She (be) terribly upset if I lost it.
- 8 If someone (walk) in here with a gun, I'd be very frightened.
- 9 What would happen if you (not/go) to work tomorrow?
- 10 I'm sure she (understand) if you explained the situation to her.

36.2 This time you have to make questions.

Example: Perhaps one day somebody will give you a lot of money.
What would you do if somebody gave you a lot of money?

- 1 Perhaps one day a millionaire will ask you to marry him/her.
What would you do if
- 2 Perhaps one day you will lose your passport in a foreign country.
What
- 3 Perhaps one day somebody will throw an egg at you.
What
- 4 Perhaps one day your car will be stolen.
What
- 5 Perhaps one day somebody will park his car on your foot.
.....

36.3 Now answer these questions in the way shown.

Example: Are you going to catch the 10.30 train? (we / arrive too early)
No. If we caught the 10.30 train, we would arrive too early.

- 1 Is he going to take the examination? (he / fail it)
No. If he, he
- 2 Are you going to invite Bill to the party? (I / have to invite Linda too)
No. If I
- 3 Are you going to bed now? (I / not / sleep)
No.
- 4 Is she going to apply for the job? (she / not / get it)
No.