

A Clear Definition of Second Conditionals

Rachel is still happy about her level of understanding of [Zero](#) and [First Conditionals](#).

Takondwa, her best friend, is still surprised by Rachel's new interest in grammar.

Takondwa: Hi Rachel! How are you feeling today?

Rachel: I'm all right. I'm just tired. I slept late last night.

Takondwa: Oh, did you? I'm sorry. What happened?

Rachel: Nothing bad. I did my homework and then I just wanted to see what **Second Conditionals** were. I checked online and in my textbook. The lessons were engaging.

Takondwa: You did extra homework!

Rachel: Ha, ha, ha. Yes, I did a few exercises.

Takondwa: So you know more about **Second Conditionals** even before the teacher has taught them to us. Rachel, I'm impressed!

Rachel: I want to understand and enjoy grammar classes more and more.

Takondwa: What did you learn then?

Rachel: I found out that situations in the **Second Conditional** are more in the realm of imagination.



Takondwa: Ha, ha, ha Rachel! The realm of imagination? What do you mean?

Rachel: Ha, ha, I mean that when we use the **Second Conditional**, we imagine situations that are impossible or unlikely to happen in the present or the future.

Takondwa: Well, give me some examples then.

Rachel: Here is an example: *"If I won the lottery, I would buy a house for my mother."*

Takondwa: Yes...So...

Rachel: Have I already won the lottery?

Takondwa: No.

Rachel: Am I likely to win the lottery?

Takondwa: Mmmh, your chances are very slim.

Rachel: Do I want to win the lottery then?

Takondwa: I think you do. You are actually dreaming about winning the lottery.

Rachel: Yes! So winning the lottery is 'hypothetical'. It's just a wild dream! It's unreal and, therefore, we use the **unreal past**.

Takondwa: Okay, I think I understand. You might be right. Let me try to make some sentences then to see if I understood your explanation very well. I'll try to make five sentences and I'll justify my choices.

This will be my definition of **Second Conditionals**. Here we go:

1. If I **could** fly, I **would** never be late at work. (*I don't fly and I never will!*)
2. If I **were** rich, I **would** buy you a lot of jewelry. (*I'm not rich and it's unlikely that I'll become rich in the future.*)
3. If animals **could** talk, we **would** know what they really thought about us. (*Animals don't talk and I think they never will!*)
4. If you **managed** to come, I **would** be very happy. (*You can't come now.*)
5. If he **were** a movie star, he **would** act in interesting films. (*Currently, he's not a movie star.*)



Well, what do you think Rachel? I've even used '**WOULD**', the **unreal past** of the **Modal Verb** WILL.

Rachel: That's very good Takondwa! I'm impressed! You have understood how to use **Second Conditionals** in such a short period of time. I didn't even use a blackboard!

Takondwa: Thank you! Another question for you Rachel: *"What's the difference between **First and Second Conditionals**?"*

Rachel: Let me see...Okay, with **First Conditionals**, you are dealing with possible or likely situations. Look at this example: *"If I meet the President in person, I will tell him what this country needs."* This is a specific situation. Perhaps you have been invited to a function where he is going to be present. You are likely to meet him. *"If I met the President in person, I would tell him what this country needed."* This is a hypothetical situation. I'm imagining what I would say but it's unlikely that I'll have that opportunity to actually meet the President in person. You see?

Takondwa: Yes, I get you. Rachel, this was a clear definition of **Second Conditionals**. I enjoyed your lesson and I'm looking forward to more.

Rachel: Thank you Takondwa! You are a gem! Oops, the real English teacher is coming! Let's go before we're late for class!

Takondwa: Let's go dear.



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