

Describing Third Conditionals

Rachel is getting better and better at English grammar and today she would like to show off her newly-acquired skills to her classmates and teacher. Remember that her topic is not that easy. Describing Third Conditionals to a friend can be a piece of cake but doing it in front of fifty-six people is no mean feat! Let's see how Rachel is going to perform...

English teacher: Good morning class!

Class (*Standing up*): Good morning teacher!

English teacher: How are you today?

Class: We are fine, thank you, and how are you?

English teacher: I'm all right. You can sit down.

Class: Thank you teacher.



English teacher: I have a nice surprise for you. Your friend, Rachel, would like to share some information about today's subject with you. Remember that we are dealing with Conditionals. We have already studied [Zero](#), [First](#) and [Second Conditionals](#). Today, Rachel will introduce [Third Conditionals](#) to you. Pay close attention to what she says. You can also take notes if you wish.

(Rachel goes to the front of the class. Her classmates are shocked of course!)

Takondwa (Smiling and feeling very proud): Good luck Rachel!

Rachel: Thank you Takondwa! *(Turning towards the whole class...)* Well, as the teacher said, I did some research on **Third Conditionals** and I found some interesting stuff.

English Teacher: Rachel, no, no, no, no. Use formal language please. Replace 'stuff' with another word.

Rachel: All right, teacher. Can I use 'lessons'?

English teacher: Yes, you can. Please, go ahead.

Priscilla: What? Rachel? Since when did she become a grammar buff? I can't believe my eyes!

Jocelyn: What's a grammar buff?

George: Keep quiet Jocelyn! Rachel, what did you find out?

Rachel: George, thank you for your question. By the way Jocelyn, a buff is somebody who is interested in a certain subject and knows a lot about it. I'm not a grammar buff but I should admit that I have recently developed a passion for English grammar. Coming back to your question George, well, I discovered that **Third Conditionals** are like [Second Conditionals](#) because they both deal with unreal or hypothetical situations. The main difference is that with **Third Conditionals**, those improbable situations are set or imagined in the past.

Teacher: I can also add that the grammatical structures are not the same. *(She writes on the board.)*

Look at these two examples:

- If I won the lottery, I would buy a car. (**2nd Conditional** = **If + Past Simple** (won) + **Would+ Bare Infinitive** (buy))
- If I had won the lottery, I would have bought a car. (**3rd Conditional**= **If + Past Perfect** (had won) + **Would have+ Past participle** (bought))

Rachel: That is true, thank you teacher. Obviously, the meanings of those two sentences are not the same. In the first one, you are imagining what would happen if you won the lottery i.e if you were given the opportunity to win the lottery in the **hypothetical future**. In the second sentence, you are imagining what would have happened if you had been given the opportunity to win the lottery in the **hypothetical past**.



George: With **Third Conditionals** you are imagining a result in the past while with **Second Conditionals** you are imagining a result in the future, am I right Rachel?

Rachel: Yes, you are. You can sum it up this way. Well done George! Okay, what's next now? Yes, I remember. Dear class, I have a game for you. The person who makes the most sentences about **Third Conditionals** within the next five minutes will win this packet of sweets!

Jocelyn: George, you can't beat me at this game!

George: Just wait and see...

Jocelyn: *If I had gone to a different school, I would never have met George.*

English teacher: Use another example Jocelyn —with a different name I mean.

Jocelyn: *If I had eaten healthier food, I would have been slim. I have another one! If I had written him a letter, he would have answered without fail.*

Rachel: 2 points for Jocelyn!

Edgar: Mmmh more examples for describing **Third Conditionals Conditionals**...Let me think...

George: *If I had been sick, I would have missed class that day.*

Edgar: *If I had spoken earlier, I would have won the game.*

George: *If I had taken my medicine, I would have felt better.*

Jocelyn: My turn! My turn!...

Edgar: 1) *If I had raised my hand, the teacher would have chosen me* 2) *If I had talked to him, I would have known the answer.* 3) *If I had bought that house, I would have been very rich.*

3rd

CONDITIONAL

Rachel: Time up everyone! Edgar, you have won! You are our winner today! Unbelievable! You have won this packet of sweets!

(Edgar's classmates, including George and Jocelyn, clap their hands by way of congratulations.)

George: Oh, no. *If I had been fast, I would have won the game!*

Class: Ha, ha, ha!

Jocelyn: *And if Edgar had been absent today, I would have gone home with that packet of sweets!*

Edgar: Ha, ha, ha, Jocelyn, I'm sorry. Don't worry, I'll share my sweets with you.

Jocelyn: Thank you Edgar! You're kind.

English teacher: Well, that was great fun Rachel. Class, please clap your hands for our future English teacher here!

(There is another round of deafening applause.)

Rachel: Thank you everybody. Describing **Third Conditionals** for you was fun. I enjoyed this lesson very much and thank you for your attention and interest!

Class: You are welcome Rachel!

English teacher: All right everybody, quiet now. Time is running out. Listen very carefully. We are going to study the grammatical structure of the **Third Conditional** again so that you can make better sentences tomorrow.

George and Jocelyn: Yes!

George: I'll win this game tomorrow.

Jocelyn: Don't count on it George.

English teacher: We'll see. Now, you two, let's get back to work.



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