A.The Grammar

Conditions

There are many different ways of making sentences with *if*. It is important to understand the difference between sentences that express:

possible conditions = first conditional
improbable conditions = second conditional
impossible conditions = third conditional
no condition = zero conditional

Possible conditions

If I see Dave, I'll tell him to call you.

This is a sentence about reality.

If I see Dave … = a real possibility
… I'll tell him to call you. = the result of a possible situation

Improbable conditions

If I had the money, I'd buy a Mercedes.

This is a sentence which is contrary to reality.

If I had the money … = not impossible. The reality is I don't have the money.
… I'd buy a Mercedes. = the result of an improbable situation

Impossible conditions

If I'd known you were coming, I'd have cooked you a meal.

This is a sentence about an impossible situation. It didn't happen, and now it's too late to change the result.

If I had known … = impossible, because I didn't know.
I'd have cooked … = the result of an impossible situation.

No conditions

If I get a headache, I take an aspirin.

If metal is heated, it expands.

These are sentences that are always true. They refer to 'all time', and are called zero conditionals. *If* means *when* or *whenever*.

1. Second conditional: improbable conditions

a. Form

***if* + Past Simple, *would* + verb**

Positive

If *I* ***won*** *some money, I****'d go*** *around the world.*
My father ***would kill*** *me* ***if*** *he* ***could*** *see me now.*

Negative

*I****'d give up*** *my job* ***if*** *I* ***didn't like*** *it.*
If *I* ***saw*** *a ghost, I* ***wouldn't talk*** *to it.*

Question

What ***would*** *you* ***do if*** *you* ***saw*** *someone shoplifting?*
If *you* ***needed*** *help, who* ***would*** *you* ***ask****?*

b. Use

1 We use the second conditional to express an unreal situation and its probable result. The situation or condition is improbable, impossible, imaginary, or contrary to known facts.

If *I* ***were*** *the president of my country, I****'d increase*** *taxes.* (But it's not very likely that I will ever be the president.)
If *my mother* ***was*** *still alive, she****'d be*** *very proud.* (But she's dead.)
If *Ted* ***needed*** *money, I****'d lend*** *it to him.* (But he doesn't need it.)

2 *If I were you, I'd …* is used to give advice.

If I were you, I'd *apologize to her.*
I'd take it easy for a while ***if I were you****.*

3 When the condition is understood, it is common to find the result clause on its own.

What would you do if you had lots of money?
*I****'d travel****.*
*I****'d give*** *it all* ***away****.*
*I****'d buy*** *my mum and dad a nice house. They****'d love*** *that!*
*You****'d give away*** *your last penny!*

4 *Would* can express preference.

*I****'d*** *love a cup of coffee.*
Where ***would*** *you like to sit?*
*I****'d*** *rather have coffee, please.*
*I****'d*** *rather not tell you, if that's all right.*
What ***would*** *you rather do, stay in or go out?*

5 *Would* can express a request.

Would *you open the door for me?*
Would *you mind lending me a hand?*

2. Third Conditional: impossible conditions

a. Form

***if* + Past Perfect, *would* + *have* + past participle**

Positive

***If** I'**d** (**had**) **worked** harder, I'**d** (**would**) **have made** more money.*
*They'**d** (**would**) **have been** here hours ago **if** they'**d** (**had**) **followed** my directions.*

Negative

***If** I **hadn't seen** it with my own eyes, I **wouldn't have believed** it.*
***If** you'**d listened** to me, you **wouldn't have got** lost.*

Question

*What **would** you **have done if** you'**d been** me?*
***If** the hotel **had been** full, where **would** you **have stayed**?*

b. Use

We use the third conditional to express an impossible situation in the past and its probable result. It is too late! These things didn't happen.

***If she'd known** he was cruel, **she wouldn't have** married him.*
*My parents **wouldn't have met if they hadn't** studied at Oxford University.*

Modal Verbs Of Probability

1. Probability in the present and future

1 *Must* and *can't* express the logical conclusion of a situation.
must = logically probable
can't = logically improbable
We don't have all the facts, so we are not absolutely sure, but we are pretty certain.
*He **must** be exhausted. He hasn't slept for 24 hours!*
*Sue **can't** have a ten-year-old daughter! She's only 24!*
*He's in great shape, even though he **must** be at least 60!*
*A walk in this weather! You **must** be joking!*
*Aren't they answering? They **must** be in bed. They **can't** be out this late!*

2 *May/might/could* express probability in the present or future.
May/might + not is the negative. *Couldn't* is rare in this use.
*He **might** be lost.*
*They **may** be stuck in traffic.*
*You **could** win the lottery this week. Who knows?*
*Dave and Beth aren't at home. They **could** be at the concert, I suppose.*
*We **may** go to Greece for our holiday. We haven't decided yet.*
*Take your umbrella. It **might** rain later.*
*I **might not** be able to come tonight. I **might** have to work late.*
*They **may not** know where we are.*

3 The continuous infinitive is formed with *be + -ing*.
*You **must be joking**!*
*They **can't** still **be eating**!*
*Peter **might be working** late.*
*They **may be coming** on a later train.*
*I **could be sitting** on a beach right now.*

2. Probability in the past

1 The perfect infinitive is formed with *have* + past participle.
*He **must have caught** a later train.*
*They **might have lost** our phone number.*

2 These forms express degrees of probability in the past.
*He **must have been** exhausted.*
*She **can't have told** him about us yet.*
*The letter **may have got lost** in the post.*
*He **might have changed** his mind.*
*They **could have moved** house.*

3 The continuous infinitive is formed with *have + been + -ing*.
*She must **have been joking**.*
*They can't **have been trying** very hard.*
*He could **have been lying** to you.*

B. Listening

T 11.5 Christina is calling Rachel. Read and listen to Rachel's side of the conversation. What do you think has happened?

R Hello.

C ...

R Hi, Christina, what on earth's wrong? Tell me.

C ...

R Oh, no! That's terrible. When?

C ...

R They must have known no one was at home. What did they take?

C ...

R Had you saved everything?

C ...

R Thank goodness. What else is missing?

C ...

R Not your camera! Well at least you still have your photos. Oh, and Ella's expensive leather jacket! Does she know?

C ...

R She's going to get such a shock when she gets back – and she's got her final exams soon.

C ...

R Yeah, that's good. I know she always takes it with her to lectures. Have you called the police?

C ...

R Good. Have they any idea who might have done it?

C ...

R So it wasn't just *your* flat then? Is there much mess? Did they ransack the place?

C ...

R Oh, how awful! Your lovely clothes. Did they take any of them?

C ...

R Yes, of course, and anyway, it must be really difficult to see exactly what's missing.

C ...

R Look, Christina you're obviously really upset. I'm coming round. I'll help you tidy up. I'll be there in 15 minutes.

C ...