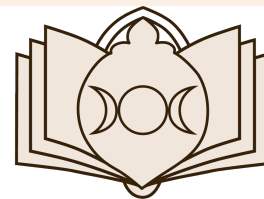


Third Conditional



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01 / Meaning & use | B1-B2

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Rewrite the past on paper. Sadly, the universe keeps its original copy.

What are we imagining?

Use the third conditional to imagine a different past condition and a different past result. The actual past cannot change. We often use this pattern for regrets, criticism, relief or explanations of missed possibilities.

IF + PAST PERFECT, WOULD HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

If I had set an alarm, I would have caught the train.

Regrets and missed opportunities

If I had applied earlier, I would have had a better chance.

Imagined past consequences

If we had left at six, we would have arrived on time.

Relief about what did not happen

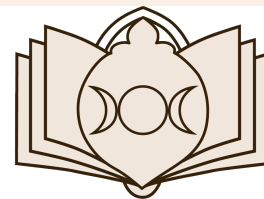
If I hadn't checked the email, I would have missed the change of room.

Two clauses, one condition

The if-clause gives the condition. The main clause gives the result. A conditional is a relationship between ideas, not just a verb recipe.



Third Conditional



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02 / Forms, comparisons & grammar gremlins

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Build the spell

Past Perfect = had + past participle. The result = would + have + past participle. All subjects use the same auxiliaries. If she had known, she would have helped. Negative: If she hadn't known, she wouldn't have helped.

Clause order & punctuation

If the if-clause comes first, normally add a comma:

If I had set an alarm, I would have caught the train.

If the main clause comes first, normally use no comma. The meaning stays the same.

Compare the meaning

Second: If I studied more, I'd get better results. = imagined present / future.

Third: If I had studied more, I'd have got better results. = imagined past.

Keep both clauses in the past for this basic third conditional. Mixed conditionals connect different times and need separate attention.

Useful variations

COULD HAVE can express ability or possibility; MIGHT HAVE expresses a less certain result: If I had saved more, I could have bought a laptop. If she had entered, she might have won. Contractions: I'd studied = I had studied; I'd have passed = I would have passed. The following verb tells you which "d" is in the cauldron.

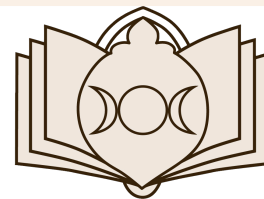
Questions

What would you have done if you had missed the train? Would she have come if you had invited her?

The question word or auxiliary belongs in the main question. The if-clause keeps statement word order. No extra grammatical gymnastics needed.



Third Conditional



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03 / Practice: put the spell to work

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1. Complete the sentences

Use the standard third conditional pattern. Write the full verb forms.

1. If I _____ (leave) earlier, I _____ (catch) the bus.
2. If she _____ (study), she _____ (pass) the test.
3. We _____ (not / get) lost if we _____ (take) a map.
4. If you _____ (tell) me, I _____ (help) you.
5. He _____ (not / miss) the meeting if he _____ (check) his email.
6. If they _____ (book) sooner, they _____ (pay) less.

2. A little context

Use the third conditional with WOULD HAVE in the result clauses.

Yesterday's concert went wrong. If we (1) _____ (check) the address, we (2) _____ (go) to the correct hall. If Max (3) _____ (charge) his phone, he (4) _____ (call) us. We (5) _____ (not / miss) the opening song if we (6) _____ (arrive) on time. Excellent evening. Slightly fictional attendance.

3. Fix the grammar gremlins

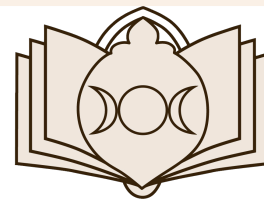
1. If I would have known, I would have called.

2. She would have went if she had had time.

3. If we had leave earlier, we would have arrived on time.



Third Conditional



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04 / Your turn & answer key

4. Rewrite without changing the meaning

I didn't see your message, so I didn't reply. (Use if.)

5. Your turn

Write four third conditional sentences about a real or imaginary day: a missed opportunity, a mistake, a helpful action and something you are relieved about.

Answer key: the spell check

1. had left; would have caught
2. had studied; would have passed
3. wouldn't have got; had taken
4. had told; would have helped
5. wouldn't have missed; had checked
6. had booked; would have paid

2. 1. had checked; 2. would have gone; 3. had charged; 4. would have called; 5. wouldn't have missed; 6. had arrived

3.
 1. If I had known, I would have called.
 2. She would have gone if she had had time.
 3. If we had left earlier, we would have arrived on time.
 4. If I had seen your message, I would have replied.
5. Sample ideas: If I had checked the timetable, I would have caught the bus. If I hadn't packed an umbrella, I would have got wet.
Your answers may differ. Check the time, meaning and verb forms. Full and contracted forms are both acceptable.

