

(Las Oraciones Condicionales – “Si” Clauses)

In Spanish, conditional (“if... then”) sentences help us express cause and effect. They allow speakers to explain what **happens**, **will happen**, **would happen**, or **would have happened** depending on a particular circumstance. These structures are common in everyday communication, storytelling, problem-solving, and hypothetical situations.

Most conditional sentences begin with **si** (meaning *if*), which introduces the **condition**. This is followed by a **result clause** that tells what occurs as a consequence of that condition.

They often begin with “**si**” (if), followed by a **result clause** that depends on that condition.

Formula:

Si (if) + condition → result

1) Overview: Three Main Types of Conditional Sentences

Type	Situation	Verb in “Si” Clause	Verb in Result Clause	English Example	Spanish Example
Type 1: Real / Possible	Likely or possible	Present	Present, Future, or Command	If I study, I will pass.	<i>Si estudio, aprobaré.</i>
Type 2: Hypothetical / Unreal Present	Not true or unlikely	<u>Imperfect Subjunctive</u>	Conditional	If I had money, I would travel.	<i>Si tuviera dinero, viajaría.</i>
Type 3: Unreal Past	Didn’t happen	Pluperfect Subjunctive	Conditional Perfect	If I had studied, I would have passed.	<i>Si hubiera estudiado, habría aprobado.</i>

2) Type 1 - Real or Possible Conditions

Use this structure for situations that are **possible or likely** to happen.

Formula:

Si + present tense → present, future, or command

A. Si + Present → Future

- *Si estudio, aprobaré el examen.* → If I study, I will pass the test.
- *Si trabajas mucho, ganarás dinero.* → If you work hard, you'll earn money.
- *Si llueve, no iremos al parque.* → If it rains, we won't go to the park.

B. Si + Present → Present

Used for general truths or habits.

- *Si llueve, la gente usa paraguas.* → If it rains, people use umbrellas.
- *Si tengo tiempo, leo por la noche.* → If I have time, I read at night.

C. Si + Present → Command

Used to give advice or instructions.

- *Si tienes hambre, come algo.* → If you're hungry, eat something.
- *Si ves a Marta, dile la verdad.* → If you see Marta, tell her the truth.

3) Type 2 - Hypothetical / Unreal Present or Future

Used to describe **imaginary or contrary-to-fact situations** — what **would** happen *if* something were true.

Formula:

Si + Imperfect Subjunctive → Conditional

Clause	Verb	Example
Si clause	imperfect subjunctive	<i>Si tuviera dinero...</i> (If I had money...)

Result clause conditional

...viajaría por el mundo. (...I would travel the world.)

Examples:

- *Si estudiarias más, sacarías mejores notas.* → If you studied more, you would get better grades.
- *Si fuera rico, compraría una casa grande.* → If I were rich, I would buy a big house.
- *Si pudieras venir, sería perfecto.* → If you could come, it would be perfect.
- *Si hiciera sol, iríamos a la playa.* → If it were sunny, we would go to the beach.

Note: These situations are **unreal or unlikely** in the present — they express *wishes, dreams, or imagination*.

4) Type 3 - Unreal Past (Contrary to Reality in the Past)

Used to describe **what didn't happen**, and what **would have happened** instead.

Formula:

Si + Pluperfect Subjunctive → Conditional Perfect

Clause	Verb	Example
Si clause	pluperfect subjunctive	<i>Si hubiera estudiado...</i> (If I had studied...)
Result clause conditional perfect		<i>...habría aprobado.</i> (...I would have passed.)

Examples:

- *Si me hubieras llamado, te habría ayudado.* → If you had called me, I would have helped you.
- *Si ellos hubieran llegado antes, habríamos cenado juntos.* → If they had arrived earlier, we would have had dinner together.
- *Si no hubiera llovido, habríamos ido al parque.* → If it hadn't rained, we would have gone to the park.
- *Si hubiera tenido tiempo, habría ido contigo.* → If I had had time, I would have gone with you.

This type is **completely imaginary** — it refers to **past events that didn't happen**.

5) Summary Table of Conditional Structures

Type	Use	“Si” Clause	Result Clause	Example
1. Real / Likely	Possible or factual	Present	Present / Future / Command	<i>Si tengo tiempo, estudiaré.</i>
2. Hypothetical / Unreal Present	Imaginary or unlikely	Imperfect Subjunctive	Conditional	<i>Si fuera rico, viajaría.</i>
3. Unreal Past	Contrary to past fact	Pluperfect Subjunctive	Conditional Perfect	<i>Si hubiera estudiado, habría pasado.</i>

6) Common “Si” Clause Verbs and Stems

Verb Imperfect Subjunctive Conditional Meaning

tener	tuviera	tendría	to have
poder	pudiera	podría	to be able
hacer	hiciera	haría	to do/make
ir	fuera	iría	to go
ser	fuerza	sería	to be
venir	viniera	vendría	to come
decir	dijera	diría	to say/tell
querer	quisiera	querría	to want
saber	supiera	sabría	to know
estar	estuviera	estaría	to be

Examples:

- *Si tuviera tiempo, lo haría.* → If I had time, I would do it.
- *Si pudiéramos, iríamos contigo.* → If we could, we'd go with you.
- *Si supieras la verdad, no dirías eso.* → If you knew the truth, you wouldn't say that.

7) Mixing Tenses in Practice

You can combine these structures depending on what you want to express:

Meaning	Formula	Example
Real / possible	Si + present → future	<i>Si llueve, no iremos.</i>
Habitual	Si + present → present	<i>Si tengo tiempo, leo.</i>
Command / advice	Si + present → command	<i>Si tienes hambre, come.</i>
Unreal present	Si + imperfect subjunctive → conditional	<i>Si fuera rico, viajaría.</i>
Unreal past	Si + pluperfect subjunctive → conditional perfect	<i>Si hubiera estudiado, habría aprobado.</i>

8) Omitted “Si” (Inverted Clauses)

In Spanish, sometimes the “si” clause is implied and omitted — especially in literary or conversational speech.

Examples:

- *Hubieras venido y lo habrías visto.* → (If you had come, you would have seen it.)
- *Fuera yo tú, no lo haría.* → (If I were you, I wouldn't do it.)

These forms are less common in speech but appear often in writing and storytelling.

9) Practice: Fill in the Blanks

Complete with the correct forms of the verbs in parentheses.

1. Si tú _____ (estudiar) más, _____ (sacar) mejores notas.
2. Si _____ (llover), no iremos al parque.
3. Si yo _____ (tener) dinero, _____ (comprar) un coche nuevo.
4. Si ellos _____ (haber llegar) antes, _____ (ver) la película.
5. Si tú _____ (poder), ¿me _____ (ayudar)?

Answers:

1. estudiaras / sacarías
2. llueve
3. tuviera / compraría
4. hubieran llegado / habrían visto
5. pudieras / ayudarías

10) Practice: Translate

1. If I have time, I'll call you.
2. If I were you, I'd tell the truth.
3. If it rains, we'll stay home.
4. If you had come, you would have met my family.
5. If they studied, they would get better grades.

Answers:

1. Si tengo tiempo, te llamaré.
2. Si fuera tú, diría la verdad.
3. Si llueve, nos quedaremos en casa.
4. Si hubieras venido, habrías conocido a mi familia.
5. Si estudiaran, sacarían mejores notas.

11) Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Wrong	Correct	Why
<i>Si tendría dinero, viajaría.</i>	<i>Si tuviera dinero, viajaría.</i>	"If" clause = imperfect subjunctive , not conditional.
<i>Si habría estudiado, pasaría.</i>	<i>Si hubiera estudiado, habría pasado.</i>	Past hypothetical = pluperfect subjunctive + conditional perfect.
<i>Si tengo dinero, viajaría.</i>	<i>Si tuviera dinero, viajaría.</i>	Mismatch: hypothetical → both parts unreal.
<i>Si llovería, no iremos.</i>	<i>Si llueve, no iremos.</i>	Real condition → present + future.

12) Quick Reference Chart

Situation	Structure	Example	Translation
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Real / possible	Si + present → future	<i>Si estudias, aprobarás.</i>	If you study, you'll pass.
Habitual truth	Si + present → present	<i>Si llueve, uso paraguas.</i>	If it rains, I use an umbrella.
Hypothetical (present/future)	Si + imperfect subjunctive → conditional	<i>Si tuviera dinero, viajaría.</i>	If I had money, I'd travel.
Hypothetical (past)	Si + pluperfect subjunctive → conditional perfect	<i>Si hubiera estudiado, habría aprobado.</i>	If I had studied, I would have passed.

Why “Si” Clauses Matter

Mastering “if... then” statements lets students:

- Express **possibility, prediction, and consequence**
- Create **complex and imaginative sentences**
- Use the **conditional and subjunctive tenses together naturally**
- Sound **fluent, nuanced, and authentic**

It's a cornerstone for real-world communication — describing hopes, regrets, and hypotheticals in everyday and academic Spanish.

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