

(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 | Imperfect Subjunctive | 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 estudiaras 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 | fuera | 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

*Si tendría dinero,
viajaría.*

*Si habría estudiado,
pasaría.*

*Si tengo dinero,
viajaría.*

Si llovería, no iremos.

Correct

*Si tuviera dinero,
viajaría.*

*Si hubiera estudiado,
habría pasado.*

*Si tuviera dinero,
viajaría.*

Si llueve, no iremos.

Why

"If" [clause = imperfect subjunctive](#), not conditional.

Past hypothetical = pluperfect subjunctive + conditional perfect.

Mismatch: hypothetical → both parts unreal.

Real condition → present + future.

12) Quick Reference Chart

| Situation | Structure | Example | Translation |
|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------|
|-----------|-----------|---------|-------------|

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|
| 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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