

The conditional tense is used to express **what would happen** or **what someone would do** under specific circumstances. It allows speakers to discuss possibilities, make polite requests, and imagine hypothetical situations. The conditional often answers questions like: “*What would you do...?*” or “*What would happen if...?*”

Mastering this tense helps learners talk about intentions, plans, and imagined scenarios with clarity and confidence.

1) What Does the Conditional Mean?

The **conditional** is used to talk about:

1. What **would happen** under certain conditions.
2. **Polite requests or suggestions.**
3. **Hypothetical or imagined situations.**
4. **Probability in the past.**

English equivalents:

- I **would go**.
- She **would study**.
- They **would travel**.

Spanish examples:

- *Yo iría contigo.* → I would go with you.
- *Ella estudiaría más si tuviera tiempo.* → She would study more if she had time.
- *Ellos viajarían a España.* → They would travel to Spain.

2) How to Form the Conditional

The **conditional tense** is very easy to form because:

- You use the **entire infinitive** (like the future tense), and
- You add a single set of **conditional endings** for all -AR, -ER, and [-IR verbs](#).

Formula:

Infinitive + Conditional Endings

Subject	Ending
yo	-ía
tú	-ías
él / ella / usted	-ía
nosotros / nosotras	-íamos
vosotros / vosotras	-íais
ellos / ellas / ustedes	-ían

3) Regular Verb Conjugations

-AR Example: hablar (to speak)

Subject	Form
yo	hablaría
tú	hablarías
él/ella/Ud.	hablaría
nosotros	hablaríamos
vosotros	hablaríais
ellos/ellas/Uds.	hablarían

Yo hablaría con ella si pudiera. → I would talk to her if I could.

-ER Example: comer (to eat)

Subject	Form
yo	comería
tú	comerías
él/ella/Ud.	comería
nosotros	comeríamos
vosotros	comeríais
ellos/ellas/Uds.	comerían

Comeríamos juntos, pero no tengo hambre. → We would eat together, but I'm not hungry.

-IR Example: vivir (to live)

Subject	Form
yo	viviría
tú	vivirías
él/ella/Ud.	viviría
nosotros	viviríamos
vosotros	viviríais
ellos/ellas/Uds.	vivirían

Vivirían en otro país si pudieran. → They would live in another country if they could.

4) Irregular Conditional Stems

The conditional tense uses the **same irregular stems** as the **future tense**, with the same endings.

A. Drop the -e

Infinitive	Stem	Example	English
poder	podr-	<i>podría</i>	I would be able
querer	querr-	<i>querrías</i>	you would want
saber	sabr-	<i>sabría</i>	I would know
caber	cabr-	<i>cabríamos</i>	we would fit
haber	habr-	<i>habría</i>	there would be

Habría más tiempo mañana. → There would be more time tomorrow.

B. Replace the vowel with -d

Infinitive	Stem	Example	English
poner	pondr-	<i>pondría</i>	I would put
salir	saldr-	<i>saldrías</i>	you would go out
tener	tendr-	<i>tendría</i>	he/she would have
valer	valdr-	<i>valdrían</i>	they would be worth
venir	vendr-	<i>vendríamos</i>	we would come

Tendríamos más dinero si trabajáramos más. → We would have more money if we worked more.

C. Completely Irregular Stems

Infinitive Stem Example English

decir	dir-	<i>diría</i>	I would say / tell
hacer	har-	<i>harías</i>	you would do / make

Te diría la verdad. → I would tell you the truth.

Haría todo por ti. → I would do anything for you.

5) Summary Chart: Conditional Endings

Person	Ending	Example (hablar)
yo	-ía	hablaría
tú	-ías	hablarías
él/ella/Ud.	-ía	hablaría
nosotros	-íamos	hablaríamos
vosotros	-íais	hablaríais
ellos/ellas/Uds.	-ían	hablarían

Same endings for all verbs — even irregulars.

6) Uses of the Conditional Tense

A. To express what would happen

- *Viajaría más si tuviera dinero.* → I would travel more if I had money.
- *Ellos comerían en casa, pero no hay comida.* → They would eat at home, but there's no food.

B. To make polite requests or offers

- *¿Podrías ayudarme?* → Could you help me?
- *¿Me dirías la hora, por favor?* → Would you [tell me the time](#), please?
- *Querría un café, por favor.* → I'd like a coffee, please.

The conditional softens commands and makes speech sound more courteous.

C. To express hypothetical situations

Used with the **imperfect subjunctive** in “if” (si) clauses.

Structure:

→ *Si + imperfect subjunctive, conditional*

Examples:

- *Si tuviera tiempo, iría contigo.* → If I had time, I would go with you.
- *Si ganáramos la lotería, viajaríamos por el mundo.* → If we won the lottery, we would travel the world.

The *imperfect subjunctive* sets up the unreal condition; the **conditional** shows the imagined result.

D. To express probability or conjecture in the past

Used like the future tense, but refers to **past time frames**.

Examples:

- *Serían las ocho cuando llegaron.* → It must have been around eight when they arrived.
- *Estaría cansado ayer.* → He was probably tired yesterday.

English equivalents: *must have been, was probably, I wonder if...*

7) Conditional vs. Future

Future (will)

Estudiaré mañana. → I will study tomorrow.

Habrà una fiesta. → There will be a party.

Diré la verdad. → I will tell the truth.

Conditional (would)

Estudiaría si tuviera tiempo. → I would study if I had time.

Habría una fiesta si no lloviera. → There would be a party if it didn't rain.

Diría la verdad, pero tengo miedo. → I would tell the truth, but I'm afraid.

Future = what *will* happen.

Conditional = what *would* happen.

8) Common Expressions Using the Conditional

Expression	English	Example
<i>Me gustaría...</i>	I would like...	<i>Me gustaría visitar España.</i>
<i>Podrías...?</i>	Could you...?	<i>¿Podrías ayudarme?</i>
<i>Deberías...</i>	You should...	<i>Deberías estudiar más.</i>
<i>Sería bueno...</i>	It would be good...	<i>Sería bueno descansar.</i>
<i>¿Qué harías tú?</i>	What would you do?	<i>¿Qué harías tú en mi lugar?</i>

9) Practice: Fill in the Blanks

[Conjugate the verbs in parentheses in the conditional](#) tense.

1. Yo _____ (ir) contigo, pero tengo que trabajar.
2. Nosotros _____ (hacer) la tarea, pero no entendemos.
3. Ella _____ (poder) venir mañana.
4. ¿Qué _____ (decir) tú en esta situación?
5. Mis padres _____ (viajar) más si tuvieran tiempo.
6. Me _____ (gustar) aprender francés.

Answers:

1. iría
2. haríamos
3. podría
4. dirías
5. viajarían
6. gustaría

10) Practice: Translate to Spanish

1. I would call you, but I lost your number.
2. We would buy a car if we had more money.
3. Would you help me, please?

4. They would be happy to go.
5. What would happen if it rained?

Answers:

1. Te llamaría, pero perdí tu número.
2. Compraríamos un coche si tuviéramos más dinero.
3. ¿Me ayudarías, por favor?
4. Estarían felices de ir.
5. ¿Qué pasaría si lloviera?

11) Common Pitfalls & Fixes

Wrong	Correct	Why
<i>Hablarás si puedes.</i>	<i>Hablarías si pudieras.</i>	“If” clause = hypothetical → conditional.
<i>Voy a decirte.</i>	<i>Te diría.</i>	Conditional = would, not “going to.”
<i>Me gustó ir.</i>	<i>Me gustaría ir.</i>	Conditional softens and adds politeness.
<i>Haré eso si tuviera tiempo.</i>	<i>Haría eso si tuviera tiempo.</i>	“Would” requires conditional.

12) Quick Summary Chart

Concept	Rule	Example
Formation	Infinitive + ía, ías, ía, íamos, íais, ían	<i>hablaría</i>
Same endings for all verbs	yes	<i>comería, viviría</i>
Irregular stems	same as future	<i>har-, dir-, podr-, tendr-</i>
Use 1	Hypothetical “would” actions	<i>Iría contigo.</i>
Use 2	Polite requests	<i>¿Podrías ayudarme?</i>
Use 3	Probability in the past	<i>Serían las ocho.</i>
With si clauses	<i>Si + imperfect subjunctive → conditional</i>	<i>Si tuviera dinero, viajaría.</i>

Why the Conditional Matters

The **conditional tense** allows speakers to:

- Express **hypothetical, polite, and imaginative ideas**
- Use **“if” (si)** clauses accurately
- Add **politeness and nuance** to conversation
- Communicate **probability and speculation** naturally

It bridges the gap between **reality and possibility**, helping learners express what *could, would, or might* happen — a hallmark of intermediate-level proficiency.

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