

# THIRD CONDITIONAL

We use it when we want to talk about things that might have been. If we want to imagine how different things could have been if a certain event had or hadn't happened. Therefore, it is for imaginary or hypothetical situations in the past.

## Imagine

**if** your alarm clock hadn't gone off this morning, would you have been late for work?

**if** your car hadn't started, would you have caught the metro?



**if** England had won the world cup, would you have been surprised?

**if** I'd eaten more for breakfast, I wouldn't be hungry now.

**if** I'd been born a millionaire, I wouldn't have trained as an English teacher.



**if** I hadn't been to South America, I'd never have seen a live volcano.

All of these situations (your alarm clock NOT going off, me being born a millionaire) are imaginary because they didn't really happen. They can't be changed now so they are hypothetical. They can't be changed because they are in the past and time travel hasn't been invented yet.

**THE FORM  
OF THIS  
STRUCTURE  
IS**

**subject  
+  
past perfect**

**if clause**

**subject  
+  
modal verb  
+  
present perfect**

**result clause**

The subject does not need to be the same in both clauses:

If John had picked me up this morning, I might have got to work earlier.

could

would

or

should

**The modal verb must  
be in the past tense**

The clauses can be swapped round, in which case you can omit the comma:

I might've got here earlier if John had picked me up this morning.

## STORY

The male character (let's call him Frank) has a series of misfortunes. First, he goes into a game shop and buys a game, normally a simple thing, but his whole day goes wrong from there on... Somehow, Frank takes the wrong game home. "No problem", he thinks, "I'll take it back to the shop and change it"

However, when he gets there, the shop is really busy, so Frank decides to hang around for a bit looking at games rather than wait for ages in the queue. Unfortunately, the store detective finds this suspicious and asks to look in Frank's bag. Frank has a game in his bag, but he doesn't have a receipt for it, as his receipt is for a different game. The store detective isn't very understanding and calls the police.

When the police arrive they take one look at poor Frank and decide that he's a notorious shoplifter they've been looking for and arrest him.

They show Frank some CCTV footage of the wanted man, and sure enough, he and Frank are very similar looking. The police go on to charge Frank with many crimes of which he is innocent!

Well, to cut a long story short, in the end Frank's brother comes to the police station to identify him. Frank is very grateful and relieved. Together they go back to the game shop and after some argument with the unsympathetic staff, Frank gets an apology and his game – the right one!

So, did all end well for Frank? Unfortunately not! Frank had forgotten that it was his brother's birthday. "Hey!" said his brother (let's call him Paul), "Is that what you got me? Thanks Frank, I love that game!" Oh dear.. poor Frank! After his brother had rescued him, what could he do? He gave Paul the game. "Happy birthday Paul," he said, "and thanks for rescuing me".

### What could have been different in Frank's day?

**If** he hadn't taken the wrong game home, well, none of it would have happened!

**If** the shop hadn't been so busy, he wouldn't have hung around looking suspicious.

## GLOSSARY

**Suspicious:** appearing to be breaking the law or rules in some way.

**Receipt:** proof that you have paid for an item.

**Notorious:** famous for doing bad things.

**Innocent:** when you have not committed any crimes.

**Grateful:** how you feel when someone does you a favour or gives you a gift.

**Relieved:** how you feel when a bad situation ends better than expected.

**Rescue:** to help someone get out of danger or trouble.