**Conditionals**

**Use**

**First conditional**

* We use the first conditional to talk about a possible future action or situation. We can also use it to talk about things that are generally true.

*If they pollute the water, we won't be able to drink it.*

(It's possible that they will pollute the water in the future. Then we won't be able to drink the water.)

**Second conditional**

* We use the second conditional to talk about unreal or imagined (hypothetical) situations in the present or future.

*If they changed their environmental views, perhaps they would get the contract.*

(This is an imagined situation in the future.)

Note that when we use the past simple with *if*, it refers to the present or future. It does not refer to the past.

* We can also use *could* and *might* instead of *would* in the main clause. We use *could* or *might* to talk about events that are possible but not certain.

*If you visited the polluted region, you could see the contamination quite clearly.*

*Fossil fuels might not run out if people didn't use scarce resources.*

**Third conditional**

* We use the third conditional to talk about situations or events in the past that did not happen and the hypothetical consequence or result of the imagined past situation.

*lf they had built the dam, those villages wouldn't have flooded.*

(But they didn't build the dam and the villages were flooded.)

We can use *could*/*might* (*not*) *have* to speculate on a possible consequence of the imagined past situation.

*lf they had built the dam, those villages might not have flooded.*

(They didn't build the dam, and it's possible that the villages wouldn't have been flooded but we are not certain.)

**Mixed conditionals**

We use mixed conditionals to talk about unreal situations when the *if-*clause and the main clause don't refer to the same time.

We use mixed second and third conditionals to talk about an imagined situation in the present or future with the hypothetical past result or consequence.

*If the pro-forest organisation didn't exist, more of the Amazon forests would have disappeared.*

(But the organisation does exist, and so more of the Amazon forests didn't disappear.)

We use mixed third and second conditionals to talk about an imagined situation or action in the past, with the imagined consequence in the present or future.

*lf the activists hadn't intervened, the Amazon would be much smaller now.*

(But the activists did intervene, so the Amazon is bigger than it would have been without their help.)