

Grammar Box - Conditional Type 3

The third conditional (also called conditional type 3) is a structure used for talking about unreal situations in the past.

Example:
Unreal situation: *If I had studied harder, I would have passed the exam.*
Real situation: *I failed the exam, because I didn't study hard enough.*

Form

Like the other conditionals, a third conditional sentence consists of two clauses, an “if” clause and a main clause:

If clause	Main clause
<i>If I <u>had studied</u> harder,</i>	<i>I <u>would have passed</u> the exam.</i>
if + subject + past perfect verb*	subject + would (OR could, OR might) have + past participle

* The past perfect is formed with the auxiliary verb “had”, and the past participle of the verb.

If the “if” clause comes first, a comma is usually used. If the “if” clause comes second, there is no need for a comma: I would have passed the exam if I had studied harder.

Use

The third conditional is used to talk about situations in the past that didn't happen and their hypothetical consequences. It is often used to express criticism or regret:

Example	Explanation
If John had driven more carefully, he would not have had an accident.	Criticism: John had an accident because he didn't drive carefully.
If I had told my mother the truth, I would have felt much better.	Regret: I didn't tell my mother the truth, so I felt really bad.

Extra Practice

Exercise 1

Fill the gap using the verb in brackets. Think very carefully about the meaning of the phrase before deciding whether to use a negative or positive verb form.

- a. I wouldn't have been angry if you [] my chocolate. (eat)
- b. If he had known you were in hospital, he [] you. (visit)
- c. We wouldn't have come by taxi if we [] the right bus. (find)
- d. We would have visited the Tate gallery if we [] time. (have)
- e. If you hadn't been asking me questions all the time, I [] the film. (enjoy)
- f. If I [] your number, I would have phoned. (know)

Exercise 2

Answer the questions about yourself. What would have happened if you ...?

- a. ... had got up an hour earlier?
- b. ... had been born five years later?
- c. ... hadn't studied English?
- d. ... had grown up in a different country?
- e. ... hadn't come to English class today?

Exercise 3

Write sentences explaining to your teacher what went wrong in the following situations using the 3rd conditional.

a. *You were late for school.*

Examples:

*I would not have been late for school if I had not missed the bus.
(I was late for school, and I did miss the bus)*

*I might have been on time if my brothers had not taken so long to get ready.
(I was not on time, my brothers did take a long time to get ready)*

- b. You did not do your homework.
- c. You forgot your dictionary.
- d. Your uniform is dirty.
- e. You fell asleep in the middle of the class.
- f. You did not go to the meeting of the English Club yesterday.

Exercise 4

- a. Think of 5 things you would have liked to have done but didn't and write a sentence for each one using the 3rd conditional.**

Example: (take ballet classes) I would have taken ballet classes if there had been a ballet school in my town.

- b. Think of 5 things you did but wished you hadn't and write a sentence for each one using the 3rd conditional.**

Example: (have an argument with your best friend) If I hadn't been so tired, I would not have got into an argument with José Maria.