

Lesson Eight

What would you do?

Aims

The aims of this lesson are to enable you to work with

- the conditional tense: *would, should*

Context

This short lesson is on a tense which is similar to the future in some ways. The conditional looks at things that have not yet happened and speculates on what *might* occur rather than what is certain to occur. The conditional is usually signaled by *would*, another word that is used in a variety of other situations.

The Conditional Tense

Now we come to another important tense, *the Conditional*, which takes the following forms:



1 I would 2 you would 3 he, she, it would	1 we would 2 you would 3 they would
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As well as *would*, it is also possible to use *should*, but *would* is more common. There is also the extra complication that *should* can mean what you *ought to* do

Here are some examples:

If I had £5000, I **would** buy a new car

If we **went** into the country, we **would enjoy** ourselves

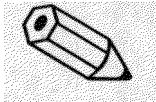
But you can also say:

You **should (ought to)** see that new film.

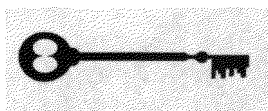
The tricky part of *would* and *should* is that they have many meanings, that can only be recognized from the situation or sentence. English is a very practical language however, and in practice it does work. One great advantage of for example *would* and *should* is that they do not change; so you only have one word to learn. Of course the spelling is a problem, and as so often the look and the spelling of the word have to be learned separately.

You will notice too in the sentence above the verbs *had* and *went* which look like the past tense. In fact it is not past, but what is called the *subjunctive mood* which we will talk about in Lesson Thirteen. As is implied by the name *mood*, the *subjunctive* deals with emotions, doubt, and uncertainty, and gives an extra dimension to language.

In fact English has more or less got rid of the *subjunctive*, it certainly does not have a separate form like French and Spanish. It remains (just) in such expressions as if I **were** you, or long **live** the king which have subjunctive meanings but not forms.

Activity 1	Fill in the following sentences using either the conditional the subjunctive, or should in the sense of ought to:
	<p>e.g. If I had my way. I would not stay here any longer</p> <p>Peter should (ought to) read this book; it is very exciting!</p> <p>(The Key is on the next page)</p> <p>a) If the train (come), Paul (go) to London.</p> <p>b) They (ought to see) what I can see!</p> <p>c) You (not like) this holiday, it is too expensive</p> <p>d) I (go) if it (be) at all possible!</p> <p>e) (Conditional) you please shut the door?</p>

Key



- a) If the train came, Paul would go to London.
- b) They should see what I can see
- c) You would not like this holiday, it is too expensive
- d) I would go if it were at all possible
- e) Would you please shut the door?

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