
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

6 Minute Grammar

First Conditional



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Neil

Hello. Welcome to 6 Minute Grammar with me, Neil.

Sophie

And me, Sophie. Hello.

Neil

Today we're talking about the first conditional.

Sophie

Yes, the first conditional. We'll be looking at why and when we use it.

Neil

We'll see how to make it...

Sophie

There'll be a very helpful pronunciation tip...

Neil

And there'll be a quiz at the end of the show, so keep listening!

Sophie

OK, let's start with why and when. We use the first conditional to talk about possible future situations - and their possible results. Here's Catherine with our first example:

Catherine

If I lose my umbrella, I will buy another one.

Sophie

Thanks, Catherine. A weather-related example there: If I lose my umbrella, I will buy another one.

Neil

And it's made of two parts. The first part describes a possible future situation, and it's made from **if** plus the present simple: **If I lose** my umbrella...

Sophie

...and the second part is the result part. It's made of **will** plus an **infinitive**. **I will buy** another one. Can you put them both together now please Catherine?

Catherine

If I lose my umbrella, I will buy another one.

Neil

Thanks, Catherine. Here are some more examples.

Catherine

If I visit Mexico, I will stay with my friends.

They will go to the beach if it's sunny.

If Michal passes his exams, we'll have a party for him.

Neil

So that's the first conditional: **if plus present simple**, with **will plus an infinitive**, to talk about a possible future situation and its possible result.

Sophie

That's right. But if we're not sure if the result part will actually happen, we can use **might** instead of **will**. Catherine.

Catherine

If I lose my umbrella, I **might** buy another one.

Neil

I might buy you dinner tonight, Sophie, if you're nice to me!

Sophie

Well, I'm always nice, Neil. So that's **might** instead of **will** – when we're not certain about the future result.

Neil

But if we're sure that the future situation will happen, we can change **if** to **when**, like this:

Catherine

When I lose my umbrella, I'll buy another one.

Sophie

You should always look after your umbrellas, Catherine. Ok, let's look at using **should** for advice in a first conditional sentence.

Catherine

You shouldn't use the kettle if it isn't working properly.

Sophie

So the result part comes first. We have a modal verb, **shouldn't**, and we use this to give advice: Don't use the kettle! The **if** part gives the possible future situation: The kettle isn't working.

Neil

But how are we going to make the tea if the kettle's broken? I haven't had a cup all morning!

Sophie

I'll do my best to fix it, Neil. Now for a pronunciation tip. In our examples about umbrellas, the two words **I will** can be shortened to **I'll**. Here's Catherine with the long and short versions of I will. Listen carefully.

Catherine

If I lose my umbrella, I will buy another one.

If I lose my umbrella, I'll buy another one.

Neil

I will buy... **I'll** buy. So **will** is shortened to just a // sound. Here are some more examples:

Catherine

They will go to the beach if it's sunny.

They'll go to the beach if it's sunny.

If Michal passes his exams, we will have a party for him.

If Michal passes his exams, we'll have a party for him.

IDENT

You're listening to BBC Learning English.

Sophie

And we're talking about the first conditional.

Neil

And it's time for a quiz! Decide if these sentences are right or wrong. Sophie will give you the answers. Number one. If William wakes up late, he miss the school bus.

Sophie

And this sentence is wrong: the **if** part is correct; but **will** is missing from the result part. Here's the correct sentence, with a short **will**: If William wakes up late, he'll miss the school bus.

Neil

Great. Another one: I'll visit Central Park if I go to New York.

Sophie

This sentence is correct!

Neil

And the last one: I might go to the doctor if I won't feel better tomorrow.

Sophie

This sentence has the future form **won't** in the **if** part - and that's wrong. The correct sentence needs **present simple** in the **if** part, so: I might go to the doctor **if I don't feel** better tomorrow.

Neil

Well done if you got that right at home. Now, before we go, here's a top tip for using the first conditional correctly – you only need one **will**, and it's never in the **if** part. Here's a wrong example:

Catherine

If I will see Peter on Saturday, I will tell him to call you.

Sophie

If I will see... I will tell him – two **wills** – that's got to be wrong. Let's have a correct version please, Catherine.

Catherine

If I see Peter on Saturday, I'll tell him to call you.

Neil

That's much better. Only one **will** and it isn't in the **if** part.

Sophie

So that's the first conditional. It's made of **if plus the present simple, with will plus the infinitive**.

Neil

And we mainly use it to talk about a possible situation in the future and its results.

Sophie

There's lots more about this at bbclearningenglish.com. Join us again for more 6 Minute Grammar.

Both

Bye.