A **conditional sentence** must have at least two clauses: a conditional clause and a result clause. The conditional clause usually states a condition and the result clause states what will happen if the condition is fulfilled.

Read the sentences given below:

If you **come** tomorrow, I **will tell** you a secret.

Here the clause ‘If you come tomorrow’ expresses a condition. It is therefore called a conditional clause. Note that conditional clauses usually begin with *if* or *unless*.

The clause ‘I will tell you a secret’ states what will happen if the condition mentioned in the conditional clause is met. It is therefore called the result clause.

**Position of If clauses**

The result clause and the if clause are interchangeable in position.

Susie **will buy** a car if she **gets** a promotion. OR If she **gets** a promotion, Susie **will buy** a car.

Note that when an *if clause* comes at the beginning of a sentence, it is usually separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.

There are three main types of conditional clauses and they are easily distinguished by the tenses used in them.

**Type 1 conditional (real condition)**

Here we use a simple present tense in the if clause and a simple future tense in the result clause.

He **will come** if you **invite** him.
He **will win** if he **works** hard.
She **will help** if you **ask** her.
I **will speak** to him if you **want**.

The type 1 conditional sentences merely state that something will happen if a certain condition is fulfilled – and the condition is nothing impossible or improbable.

**Type 2 conditional (unreal or imaginary condition)**

Here we use a simple past tense in the if clause and would + infinitive in the result clause. Note that the auxiliaries should and could are also used.
He would come if you invited him.

The type 2 conditional sentences state the probable result of an imaginary condition. The possibility of ‘your inviting him’ and ‘his coming’ is more doubtful here than in a sentence in the type 1 conditional.

More examples are given below:

He would win if he worked hard.
She would help if you asked her.
I would speak to him if you wanted.
I would do it if it were possible.
If he was twenty years younger, he could perhaps do it.

The type 2 conditional sentences are sometimes used to give advice.

If I were you I would accept this offer.
If I were you I wouldn’t provoke the old man.

Note the use of were instead of was.