FIRST CONDITION

A possible future situation and its result:

If you go out, you'll have fun.

Be careful - I know the first half looks like the present simple, but it's talking about the future.

We often use this form to make promises or threats, or to negotiate:

I'll buy you a present if I go on holiday.   (promise)
I'll hit you if you do that again!   (threat)
If you lend me $5.00, I'll buy you a drink later.   (negotiation)

Things to remember:

It doesn't matter if you say the situation or the result first:

I'll help you if you want. = If you want, I'll help you.

You can use "unless" to mean "if not":

If you don't help me, I will lose the game. = Unless you help me, I will lose the game.

Future Situation = if + present simple	Possible Result = will/won't + verb
If you don't help me	I'll be angry.
Unless you help me	I'll be angry.

First Conditional: Advanced Points

You can use present simple, continuous or perfect to give the possible situation.
You can use any expression which talks about the future for the result.

Possible Situation	Possible Result
If he works too hard ...	... he's going to be tired.
If he's still working at midnight ...	... he might be tired tomorrow.
If he hasn't finished by midnight ...	... please tell him to go home.

SECOND CONDITIONAL

The second conditional is used to talk about ...

Imagined present/future situations and their imagined results:

If you spoke English, you wouldn't need to read this.
If I were you, I would go to bed.

We often use this form to give advice.

Compare the first conditional with the second conditional:

If I win the lottery, I'll buy you a present! (first)
If I won the lottery, I'd buy a castle! (second)

In the first example, the speaker buys lottery tickets, and is hopeful of winning (they think it's a real, future possibility). In the second, the speaker is just having fun imagining it.

Imaginary Situation	Imaginary Result
if + past simple	would(n't) + verb

If he asked me to marry him,	I'd say "yes".
If it rains tomorrow,	I'd stay home and bake cookies.

It doesn't matter if you say the situation or the result first:

I'd marry him if he asked.   =   If he asked, I'd marry him.

Second Conditional: Advanced Points

With I, he, she and it you can say *was* or *were* - both are common in English:

If it was/were warmer, we would go to the beach.

However, in traditional grammar, *were* is considered correct, and in normal conversation *were* can sound more formal.

You can use past simple or continuous to talk about imaginary situations. You can use would, might and could to talk about the result of these situations.

Situation

Present State (past simple)   If I was less hungry ...
Present Action (past continuous)   If I was eating now ...
Future Action (past simple)   If I ate tonight ...

Result

Definite Result (would)   ... I would be happy.
Possible Result (might)   ... I might be happy.
Ability to do something (could)   ... I could be happy.

THIRD CONDITIONAL

This is used to talk about imagined past situations and their imagined results.

An actual event:

- Yesterday, I was sick because I drank some old milk.

To imagine a past event:

- If I hadn't drunk that old milk, I would have been sick.

We often use this form to describe regrets or give blame:

If I had studied harder, I would have got an 'A'.
If you'd been on time, we wouldn't have missed the film.

Imagined Past Situation	Imagined Past Result
if + had(n't) + past participle	would(n't) + have + past participle
If he had told the truth	I'd have believed him.

Third Conditional: Advanced Points

It doesn't matter if you say the situation or the result first:

If I'd married him, we'd have had lots of children.
We'd have had lots of children if I'd married him.

You can use would/might/could + have to talk about the result.

If I had been less hungry…	I wouldn't have eaten all your biscuits.
	I might have eaten less.
	I could have waited until dinner time.

MIXED CONDITIONALS

Ex: Second Conditional:

If I had a good job, I would be rich.

Ex: Third Conditional:

If I had studied medicine, I would have become a doctor.

Mixed Conditionals:

A mixed conditional gives a situation and result - but one is in the past, and the other is in the present. For example:

If I had studied medicine at university, I'd be rich now.

This is an imaginary past situation, with an imaginary present result.

Imagined Past Situation if + had(n't) + past participle	Imagined Present Result would(n't) + verb (infinitive)
If we had taken the car…	we would not be late.

Imagined Present Situation if + past simple	Imagined Past Result would(n't) + have + past participle
If I didn't love him…	I would not have married him.

As with all other conditionals, it doesn't matter which half of the sentence comes first:

If I didn't love him, I wouldn't have married him. = I wouldn't have married him if I didn't love him.

Would Rather and Would Sooner

'Would rather' and 'would sooner' have the same meaning as 'would prefer'. However, the grammar is different.

I'd prefer to be rich than poor.
would prefer + to + verb (infinitive with to)

I'd rather be rich than poor.
would rather + verb (infinitive)

I would sooner be rich than poor.
would sooner + verb (infinitive)

If we talk about things we want another person to do, then we use a past form after would rather/sooner:

I would rather you were rich than poor.
would rather + subject + past simple

With prefer there is no change in tense:

I would prefer you to be rich than poor.
would prefer + subject + to + verb