

“Si” clauses (“If” clauses)

FUTURE POSSIBLE

Si tengo el dinero, compraré la casa.

↓
presente ind.

↓
futuro

If I have the money, I will buy the house.

↓
present

↓
future

PRESENT UNREAL

Si tuviera el dinero, compraría la casa.

↓
imperfecto
de subjuntivo

↓
condicional

If I had the money, I would buy the house.

↓
past

↓
conditional

PAST UNREAL

Si hubiera tenido el dinero, habría comprado la casa.

↓
pluscuamperfecto de
subjuntivo
(past perfect -pluperfect- subjunctive)

↓
condicional perfecto

If I had had the money, I would have bought the house.

↓
past perfect

↓
conditional perfect

Real vs. unreal conditions

A **real condition** is one which may actually come about or at least is viewed as a possibility; thus, in Spanish, the indicative is normally used both in the “if” clause and in the main part of the sentence:

Si ella viene mañana, iremos al cine. *If she comes tomorrow [she may actually come], we will go to the movies.*

Si nieva mucho, podré esquiar. *If it snows a lot [it may really snow], I can ski.*

Note that the English versions of the above conditions suggest the indicative by the lack of hypothesis-suggesting words such as “would”, and by not using the past tense to refer to a present-time situation.

In contrast, an **unreal or contrary-to-fact condition** is one which will not come about or is viewed as being completely hypothetical. In this case, the “if” clause is normally in a past subjunctive tense, and the main verb is in a conditional tense.

Present or future time situations. The imperfect subjunctive is used in the “if” clause, and the conditional in the main clause:

Si yo fuera rico compraría un coche. *If I were rich [I am **not** rich] I would buy a car.*

¿Qué harías si fueras presidente? *What would you do if you were president? [you aren't]*

Si Juana estuviera aquí, ¿le dirías la verdad? *If Juana were here [she isn't here], would you tell her the truth?*

Past time situations. Past perfect subjunctive in the “if” clause, conditional perfect in the main clause:

Si la hubiera visto, habría dicho algo. *If I had seen her [I didn't see her] I would have said something.*

Si hubieras venido, te habrías divertido mucho. *If you had come [you didn't come] you would have had a great time.*

¿Habrías ido a la fiesta si yo la hubiera planeado? *Would you have gone to the party if I had planned it? [I didn't plan it]*

Reminders/tips

The present subjunctive is NOT used after **si** (“if”)!

In unreal conditions the standard pattern is a past subjunctive in the “if” clause and a conditional tense in the main clause:

<u>“if” clause</u>	<u>main clause</u>	<u>time aspect</u>
si + imperfect subjunctive	conditional	present/future time actions (but expressed by the past tense in both English and Spanish)
Si hablaras,	te creerían.	
<i>If you <u>spoke</u>,</i>	<i>they <u>would believe</u> you.</i>	
si + past perfect subjunctive	conditional perfect	past time actions (expressed by previous-past time tenses both in English and Spanish)
Si hubieras hablado,	te habrían creído.	
<i>If you <u>had spoken</u>,</i>	<i>they <u>would have believed</u> you.</i>	

There are frequent tip-offs in English sentences that the conditional/past subjunctive combination is required in the corresponding Spanish sentence. (Compare with the examples above):

1. Use of the past tense (“spoke”) in the “if” clause to indicate a present/future situation. (“If you *spoke* [right now]...”).
2. Use of the word “would” in the main clause to indicate conjecture for present/future time. (“...they *would believe* you [now or in the future]”).
3. Use of “would have” to in either clause to indicate conjecture/hypothesis in past time. (“...they *would have believed* you”).