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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## 6 Minute Grammar

### The third conditional



*This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Neil**

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

**Catherine**

And me, Catherine. Hello.

**Neil**

And today, we're talking about the third conditional.

**Catherine**

Yes - we'll be looking at why and when we use it.

**Neil**

And we'll see how to form it...

**Catherine**

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

**Neil**

And there'll also be a third conditional quiz at the end of the show!

**Catherine**

Now, the main use of the third conditional is to talk about \*\*\*\*\* situations in the past. And here's Mike with our first example:

**Mike**

I was really late for work today. When I got to the station, it turned out the trains were cancelled. **If I \*\*\*\*\* known the trains were cancelled, I would \*\*\*\*\* taken a bus.**

**Catherine**

And Mike's last sentence is describing an imaginary situation. In reality, Mike was late for work because he didn't know the trains were \*\*\*\*\* , and he didn't take a bus. He uses the third conditional to imagine a different \*\*\*\*\* situation when he says: **If I had**

**Neil**

Let's take a closer look. There are two parts to this sentence. One part is made with **if** plus  
\*\*\*\*\* **perfect**:

**Mike**

**If I had known** the trains were cancelled ...

**Neil**

And the other part is made of **subject** plus \*\*\*\*\* **have** plus a **past participle**.

**Mike**

... **I would have taken** a bus.

**Catherine**

And we put the two parts together to talk about an imaginary situation in the \*\*\*\*\*,  
and its imaginary \*\*\*\*\*.

**Neil**

You can change the order of the two parts if you like: the meaning stays the \*\*\*\*\*:

**Mike**

**I would have taken** a bus **if I had** \*\*\*\*\* the trains were cancelled.

**Neil**

Let's have some more examples. Listen out for **if** plus **past perfect** with **would**  
**have** plus a \*\*\*\*\* **participle**.

**Mike**

I got two Ds and an F in my exams. **If I** \*\*\*\*\* **worked harder**, **I** \*\*\*\*\* **have got**  
**better grades**.

Patty was a great singer when she was younger. **She** \*\*\*\*\* **have** \*\*\*\*\* **that TV**  
**talent show if she** \*\*\*\*\* **entered it**.

**Catherine**

And we can use negatives in either or both parts of the sentence. Here are a couple of  
examples, with the negative forms **hadn't** and **wouldn't**:

**Mike**

Abid met his wife at university. They've been married for 3 years now. **If Abid hadn't**  
\*\*\*\*\* **to university**, **he wouldn't** \*\*\*\*\* **met his wife**.

I registered my mobile phone on a tracker website. When I lost it, I logged on to the site and they told me where it was. **If I hadn't \*\*\*\*\* my phone, it would have \*\*\*\*\* lost for ever.**

### Catherine

So you can see that the third conditional is very useful to talk about things we're pleased we did, as well as things we wish we'd done \*\*\*\*\*. So what about you Neil – anything you'd change – or not change – in your past?

### Neil

I lived in Canada when I was a child and if I hadn't \*\*\*\*\* in Canada I \*\*\*\*\* have got dual citizenship. I'm a citizen of the UK and Canada.

### IDENT

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### Catherine

And we're talking about third conditionals. And now it's time to talk about pronunciation. We use lots of short forms in third conditionals. And here's Mike again with an example.

### Mike

If I'd had my \*\*\*\*\*, I'd have taken a \*\*\*\*\*.

### Catherine

So in the **if** part, **I** and **had** are shortened to **I'd**. In the main part, **I** and **would** are \*\*\*\*\* to **I'd**, and we also drop the **h** from have. So I would have becomes '**I'd've**'. Let's hear another example:

### Mike

If I'd \*\*\*\*\* up earlier, I wouldn't have \*\*\*\*\* my flight.

### Catherine

So **I had** become **I'd** in the if part and **would not have** becomes '**wouldn't've**' in the main part.

### Neil

Now it's time for a quiz! I'm going to say two sentences, and you have to use them to make a third conditional sentence. Here's the first one. Mike forgot Jane's birthday. She was upset.

### Catherine

If Mike \*\*\*\*\* Jane's birthday, she \*\*\*\*\* upset.

### Neil

Good. Another one: I ate too much. I feel sick.

**Catherine**

If I \*\*\*\*\* too much, I \*\*\*\*\* sick.

**Neil**

And the last one: I didn't go to the party. I didn't meet Francesca.

**Catherine**

I \*\*\*\*\* Francesca if \*\*\*\*\* to the party.

**Neil**

Exactly. And that's the end of the quiz. Well done if you got them all right. And we've just got time for a top tip before we finish. Remember, in standard English, there's only one \*\*\*\*\* in a third conditional sentence. We don't use **would** in the \*\*\*\*\* part. Here's an example of an incorrect sentence.

**Mike**

If Tom would have said sorry, Sonia would have forgiven him.

**Neil**

Here's the correct version:

**Mike**

If Tom \*\*\*\*\* said sorry, Sonia \*\*\*\*\* have forgiven him.

**Neil**

Great. So that's the third conditional. It's made of **if** plus the \*\*\*\*\* tense, and \*\*\*\*\* plus the \*\*\*\*\* . We use it to talk about \*\*\*\*\* situations in the \*\*\*\*\* .

**Catherine**

There's more about this on our website at [bbclearningenglish.com](http://bbclearningenglish.com). Join us again for more 6 Minute Grammar.

**Both**

Bye.