

## If-clauses

There are three main types of 'if-clauses' (or conditional sentences) in English. They are used in basically the same way as conditional sentences in German.

Type 1 – future situations (probable/possible)	
If you study hard, you will pass the exam. – If-clause: simple present – Main clause: will future	German equivalent: Wenn du fleißig lernst, wirst du die Prüfung bestehen.
If you have studied hard, you will pass the exam. – If-clause: present perfect – Main clause: will future	German equivalent: Wenn du fleißig gelernt hast, wirst du die Prüfung bestehen.
If you study hard, you can pass the exam.	German equivalent: Wenn du fleißig lernst, kannst du die Prüfung bestehen.
If you study hard, you might pass the exam.	German equivalent: Wenn du fleißig lernst, wirst du eventuell die Prüfung bestehen.

Type 2 – future situations (improbable/unlikely)	
If you studied hard, you would pass the exam. – If-clause: simple past – Main clause: conditional I (would + infinitive)	German equivalent: Wenn du fleißig lernst würdest, würdest du die Prüfung bestehen.
If you studied hard, you could pass the exam.	German equivalent: Wenn du fleißig lernst würdest, könntest du die Prüfung bestehen.

Type 3 – past situations (unreal/impossible/hypothetical)	
If you had studied hard, you would have passed the exam. – If-clause: past perfect – Main clause: conditional II (would + have + past participle)	German equivalent: Wenn du fleißig gelernt hättest, hättest du die Prüfung bestanden.
If you had studied hard, you could have passed the exam.	German equivalent: Wenn du fleißig gelernt hättest, hättest du die Prüfung bestehen können.
If you had studied hard, you might have passed the exam.	German equivalent: Wenn du fleißig gelernt hättest, hättest du eventuell die Prüfung bestehen können.

Exceptions to the rules	Examples
The present tense is used in both clauses in general statements and for repeated activities or habits.	If plants don't get enough water, they die. If she has time, she goes running.
For recommendations and advice use 'were' in the 'if-clause' and conditional I (would + infinitive) in the main clause.	If I were you, I would study a bit harder.
'If' can be left out when the order of the verb and subject are reversed.	Had I studied harder, I would have passed the exam.

Frequently made mistakes	Examples
Don't use "will" in the "if-clause", except to express willingness.	They can come to Britain if they'll work.
Don't use "would" in the "if-clause" except when you are making a polite request.	I would be grateful if you would do your homework in future.
Be careful with commas: If you start with an "if-clause", use a comma. Don't use a comma if you don't start with the "if-clause".	