CONDITIONAL SENTENCES

Because they express the conditions under which a certain action will take place, *if*-clauses are called <u>conditional</u> clauses. In a conditional sentence, the (dependent) *if*-clause describes the condition that will allow the action in the main (independent) clause to occur. There are three different types of conditional sentences, depending on how likely it is that the proposed action will occur.

- **If it is very likely that the action will occur, the if-clause uses the simple <u>present tense</u>, and the main clause uses the <u>future tense</u>. The if-clause can come before or after the main clause.**

    If Connie <u>seduces</u> the gamekeeper, Clifford <u>will be</u> angry. [Connie has her eyes on the gamekeeper, so she will probably do it]
    If the Monkey <u>jumps</u> out of the window, Portnoy <u>will feel</u> guilty. [the Monkey seems unstable, so she will probably jump]
    Dr. Frankenstein <u>will regret</u> it if he <u>assembles</u> a mate for his monster. [he is seriously thinking about doing it, though]

- **If it is rather unlikely—but still possible—that the action will occur, the if-clause uses the simple <u>past tense</u>, and the main clause uses <u>would</u> before the verb.**

    If Connie <u>seduced</u> the gamekeeper, Clifford <u>would</u> be angry. [there's a possibility that she will do it, but she's having second thoughts]
    If the Monkey <u>jumped</u> out the window, Portnoy <u>would</u> feel guilty. [however, she's probably going to be sensible and not jump]
    Dr. Frankenstein <u>would</u> regret it if he assembled a mate for his monster. [but it seems unlikely that he will do it]

- **If it is impossible that the action will occur because the opportunity has passed, the if-clause uses the <u>past perfect tense</u>, and the main clause uses the future perfect conditional tense: <u>would have + past participle</u> of the verb.**

    If Connie <u>had seduced</u> the gamekeeper, Clifford <u>would have been</u> angry. [but, alas, she remained faithful to her Clifford]
    If the Monkey <u>had jumped</u> out of the window, Portnoy <u>would have felt</u> guilty. [but thankfully, the Monkey did not jump and Portnoy does not need to blame himself]
    Dr. Frankenstein <u>would have regretted</u> it if he <u>had assembled</u> a mate for his monster. [but he had the good sense to stop himself in time]

✋ Whatever you do, never put "if" and "would" in the same clause!

►Did you like the sample sentences? Get the whole story in D. H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, Philip Roth's <u>Portnoy's Complaint</u>, and Mary Shelley's <u>Frankenstein</u>.