Grammar Reference

1. Grammar Reference: Second Conditional

The second conditional uses the <u>past simple</u> after *if*, then 'would' and the base form of the verb:

Form:

> **if + subject + past simple, subject + would + base verb**

or

> **Subject + would + base verb + if + subject + past simple**

(We can use '***were***' instead of 'was' with '***I***' and ***'he/she/it'***. This is done in formal writing).

It has two uses:

a. **First, we can use it to talk about things in the future that are probably not going to be true.**

Example:
> If I **won** the lottery, I **would buy** a big house.
> (I probably won't win the lottery)
> If I **met** the Queen of England, I **would say** hello.
> She **would pass** the exam if she ever **studied**.
> (She never studies, so this won't happen.)

b. **Second, we can use it to talk about something in the present which is impossible, because it's not true.**

Example:
> If I **had** his number, I **would call** him.
> (I don't have his number now, so it's impossible for me to call him.)
> If I **were** you, I **wouldn't go** out with that man.

How is this different from the first conditional?

This kind of conditional sentence is different from the first conditional because this is a lot more unlikely.

For example:

Second conditional:

If I **had** enough money, I **would buy** a house with twenty bedrooms and a swimming pool.   (I'm probably not really going to have much money, it's just a dream, not very real.)

First conditional:

> If I **have** enough money, I **will buy** some new shoes. (It's much more likely that I'll have enough money to buy some shoes.)

2. **Grammar Reference: Past Modals for Hypothetical Situations (Could have, should have, would have)**

These past modal verbs are all used hypothetically, to talk about things that didn't really happen in the past.

1. **Could have + past participle** means that something was possible in the past, or you had the ability to do something in the past, but that you didn't do it.

   Example:

   > I **could have stayed** up late, but I decided to go to bed early.

   > They **could have won** the race, but they didn't try hard enough.

   > Julie **could have bought** the book, but she borrowed it from the library instead.

Couldn't have + past participle means that something wasn't possible in the past, even if you had wanted to do it.

Example:

> I **couldn't have arrived** any earlier. There was a terrible traffic jam.
> (= it was impossible for me to have arrived any earlier.)

> He **couldn't have passed** the exam, even if he had studied harder.
> (= it's a really, really difficult exam.)

2. **Should have + past participle** can mean something that would have been a good idea, but that you didn't do it. It's like giving advice from the past when you say it to someone else, or regretting what you did or didn't do when you're talking about yourself.

Example:

> I **should have studied** harder.
> (= I didn't study very hard and so I failed the exam. I'm sorry about this now.)
> I **should have gone** to bed early.
> (= I didn't go to bed early and now I'm tired)
> I **shouldn't have eaten** so much cake.
> (= I did eat a lot of cake and now I don't feel good.)

3. **Would have + past participle** to talk about something you wanted to do but didn't (willingness). This is very similar to the third conditional, but we don't need an 'if clause'.

Example:

> I **would have gone** to the party, but I was really busy.
> (= I wanted to go to the party, but I didn't because I was busy. If I hadn't been so busy, I would have gone to the party.)
>
> I **would have called** you, but I didn't know your number.
> (= I wanted to call you but I didn't know your number, so I didn't call.)
>
> A: Nobody volunteered to help us with the fair.
> B: **I would have helped** you. I didn't know you needed help.
> (= If I had known that you needed help, I would have helped you.)