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Grammar Reference

The perfect conditional

A - Construction

The **perfect conditional** is formed as follows:

would + have + past participle

Example:

I **would have been** on time if the bus hadn't been late.

They **wouldn't have come** anyway.

B - Use

The **perfect conditional** is used in a **main clause**

in which the dependent clause is introduced by **if + past perfect** expressing a **condition** or an **assumption**.

Example:

If you had listened to me, you **wouldn't have failed**.

If I had been you, I **would have done** the same.

If it hadn't been for + noun/pronoun

(+ **gerund**) is a more complex form of the **perfect conditional**. This structure is used to talk about results that **would not have been** possible **without** an action, event, or person. It may be **preceded** or **followed** by a **main clause** using **would**.

Example:

If it hadn't been for the sudden upswing in the market, we **wouldn't** be performing so well.

I **would have never been** able to master this technique **if it hadn't been for your help**.

Note. **If it hadn't been for** may be followed by a **possessive noun** or **pronoun**.

Example:

If it hadn't been for Marianne's insight, we **wouldn't have been** able to manage the crisis.

Also note that **several nouns** and **pronouns** may follow the expression.

Example:

If it hadn't been for our dedication, long hours, and **rigor**, the results **would be** less impressive.

If it weren't for + noun/pronoun (+ gerund) may be used interchangeably with **if it hadn't been for**. It is constructed with the **past subjunctive form** of the verb **to be**. The construction of the **main clause** is the same as in the constructions above.

Example:

The plans **would have never come** to fruition **if it weren't for the team working** so hard.

If it weren't for the economic recovery, the company probably **wouldn't have survived**.

Infinitive clauses

- A **verb** taking as its **object** an **infinitive clause** must convey a **close relation** between its subject and that of the **infinitive clause** itself. 'To ask,' 'to expect,' and 'to want' are examples of verbs that may introduce **infinitive clauses**. When an **infinitive clause's subject** is a **pronoun**, the **pronoun** itself is an **object** of the sentence's main **verb**.

'For' introduces some **infinitive clauses**.

Example: I'll **ask my secretary to fax** you.
Do you **expect him to pay** more?
She'd **like for me to go** with you.

Note. In an **infinitive clause**, any expression of **negation precedes** the **infinitive**.

Example: He **advised** me **not to wait**.

- 'For' precedes **infinitive clauses** expressing **goals**.

Example: I brought this book **for you to read**.

- 'For' may also precede **objective infinitive clauses** that do not express goals.

Example: I'm waiting **for the rain to stop**.

Note. 'For' + **gerund** ('-ing' verb) introduces **clauses** expressing **cause**.

However, this form is **not** considered an **infinitive clause**.

Example: He was punished **for forgetting** to do his homework.

- **Question words** followed by the **infinitive** can be used to **ask for information** in a **direct** or **indirect** way.

Example: I'm not sure **how to find** the offices from here.

Could you let me know **when to start** my presentation?

Have we decided **how much to spend** on advertising?

I don't know **what to do** about the problem.

No one was told **where to go**.

Note. The **question words** **what**, **which**, **how many**, and **how much** are sometimes followed by a **noun**.

Example: Can you tell me **which train to take**?

We don't know **what tasks to do** first.

She didn't say **how much time to spend** on the report.

The **infinitive** can also be preceded by **whether**.

Example: Geena hasn't decided **whether to come** or not.

Also note that the **question word** **why** cannot be followed by the infinitive.

'To be left' – 'To have left'

'**To be left**' and '**to have left**' express the same idea but are used in different ways.

- The **passive 'to be left'** is formed using **subject + 'be left.'**

Example: The weather was bad. **Few people were left** on the streets.

- The **active 'to have left'** takes a **direct object** which precedes **'left.'** The resulting form is **subject + 'have' + direct object + 'left.'**

Example: Do you have any tea?

I only **have coffee left.**

Do **you have any rooms left?**