

Unit 40

In case

a Study this example situation:



Geoff is a football referee. He always wears two watches during a game because it is possible that one watch will stop.

He wears two watches **in case one of them stops**.

In case one of them stops = 'because it is possible that one of them will stop'.

Here are some more examples of **in case**:

- John might phone tonight. I don't want to go out **in case he phones**. (= because it is possible that he will phone)
- I'll draw a map for you **in case you can't find our house**. (= because it is possible that you won't be able to find it)

b Do not use **will** after **in case**. Use a present tense when you are talking about the future:

- I don't want to go out tonight **in case John phones**. (*not* 'in case John will phone')

c **In case** is not the same as **if**. Compare these sentences:

- We'll buy some more food **if Tom comes**. (= Perhaps Tom will come; if he comes, we'll buy some more food; if he doesn't come, we won't buy any more food.)
- We'll buy some food **in case Tom comes**. (= Perhaps Tom will come; we'll buy some more food now, whether he comes or not; then we'll *already* have the food *if* he comes.)

Compare:

- This letter is for Ann. Can you **give** it to her **if** you see her?
- This letter is for Ann. Can you **take** it with you **in case** you see her?

d You can use **in case** to say why someone did something in the past:

- We bought some more food **in case Tom came**. (= because it was possible that Tom would come)
- I drew a map for her **in case she couldn't find our house**.
- We rang the bell again **in case they hadn't heard the first time**.

e 'In case of ...' is different from **in case**. **In case of fire** means 'if there is a fire':

- **In case of fire**, please leave the building as quickly as possible.
- **In case of emergency**, telephone this number. (= if there is an emergency)