

Unit 36

If sentences (present/future)

a Compare these examples:

Tom: I think I left my lighter in your house. Have you seen it?
Ann: No, but I'll have a look. **If I find** it, I'll give it to you.

In this example there is a real possibility that Ann will find the lighter. So she says: '**If I find ... I'll ...**' (see also **Unit 9c**).

Ann: **If I found** £100 in the street, I would keep it.

This is a different type of situation. Ann is not thinking about a real possibility; she is imagining the situation. So she says: '**If I found ... I would ...**' (*not* 'if I find ... I'll').

When you imagine a future happening like this, you use a *past tense* (**did/was/found** etc.) after **if**. But the meaning is *not* past:

- What would you do **if you won** a million pounds?
- **If we didn't go** to their party next week, they would be very angry.
- Ann wouldn't lend me any money **if I asked** her.

b We do not normally use **would** in the **if** part of the sentence:

- I'd be very frightened **if someone pointed** a gun at me. (*not* 'if someone would point')
- **If we didn't go** to their party next week, they would be angry. (*not* 'if we wouldn't go')

Sometimes it is possible to say **if ... would**, especially when you ask someone to do something in a formal way:

- I would be very grateful **if you would** send me your brochure and price list as soon as possible. (*from a formal letter*)
- 'Shall I close the door?' 'Yes, please, **if you would**.'

c In the other part of the sentence (not the **if** part) we use **would/wouldn't**. **Would** is often shortened to **'d**, especially in spoken English:

- If you stopped smoking, you'd probably **feel** healthier.
- They **wouldn't come** to the party if you invited them.