

Unit 41 Unless, as long as and provided/providing (that)

a Unless

Study this example situation:



Joe can't hear very well. If you speak to him normally, he can't hear you. If you want him to hear you, you have to shout.

Joe can't hear **unless** you shout.

This means: 'Joy *can* hear only *if* you shout'.

Unless means **except if**. We use **unless** to make an exception to something we say.

Here are some more examples of **unless**:

- Don't tell Ann what I said **unless** she asks you. (= except if she asks you)
- I'll come tomorrow **unless** I have to work. (= except if I have to work)
- I wouldn't eat fish **unless** I was extremely hungry. (= except if I was)

We often use **unless** in warnings:

- We'll be late **unless** we hurry. (= except if we hurry)
- **Unless** you work harder, you're not going to pass the examination. (= except if you work harder)
- The man said he would hit me **unless** I told him where the money was. (= except if I told him)

Instead of **unless** it is possible to say **if ... not**:

- Don't tell Ann what I said **if** she doesn't ask you.
- We'll be late **if** we don't hurry.

b As long as / provided (that) / providing (that)

These expressions mean **but only if**:

- You can use my car **as long as** (or 'so long as') you drive carefully. (= but only if you drive carefully)
- Travelling by car is convenient **provided (that)** you have somewhere to park. (= but only if you have somewhere to park)
- **Providing (that)** she studies hard, she should pass the examination. (= but only if she studies hard)

c When you are talking about the future, do *not* use **will** with **unless**, **as long as**, **provided** or **providing**. Use a *present* tense:

- We'll be late **unless** we hurry. (*not* 'unless we will hurry')
- **Providing** she studies hard ... (*not* 'providing she will study')

See **Unit 9** for more information about this rule.