

Beginner

The Use of If I do and If I did

1. Compare these examples:

a. Ota has lost her watch. She tell Ryo:

Ota: I've lost my watch. Have you seen it anywhere?

Ryo: No, but **if I find** it, I'll tell

In this example, Ryo feels there is a real possibility that she will find the watch. So she says: **if I find ... , I'll ...**

b. Mava says:

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But the meaning is *not* past:

Examples:

1. What would you do **if you won** a million pounds?
(we don't really expect this to happen)
2. I don't really want to go to their party, but I probably will go.
They'd be upset **if I didn't** go.
3. **If there was** (or **were**) an election tomorrow, who would you vote for?

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2. We do not normally use **would** in the **if**-part of the sentence:

Examples:

1. I'd be very frightened **if** somebody **pointed** a gun at me. (*not if somebody would point*)
2. **If I didn't** go to their party, they'd be upset. (*not If I wouldn't go*)

But you can use **if ... would** when you ask somebody to do something:

Example: (*from a formal letter*) I would be grateful **if you would let** me know your decision as soon as possible.

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Examples:

1. If you took more exercise, you **might feel** better. (= it is possible that you would feel better)
2. If it stopped raining, we **could go** out. (= we would be able to go out)

4. Do not use **when** in sentence like those on this page:

Examples:

1. They'd be upset **if** I didn't go to their party. (*not when I didn't go*)
2. What would you do **if** you were bitten by a snake? (*not when you were bitten*)