Choosing the right verb in conditional sentences

• When if is used to introduce a dependent clause, the sentence is called a conditional sentence. Unreal conditional sentences express unreal or imaginary situations, while future possible conditionals are used to predict what will happen in the future under certain circumstances.

• In unreal conditionals, the verb in the dependent clause (if-clause) is in the past tense, and in the independent clause (result clause) would + the base form of the verb is used.

  o Example: If I had a million dollars, I would donate a portion of it to my university.

• In the unreal conditional, were is used in the if-clause even with I, he, she and it.

  o Example: If I were president, I would support universal health care.

• In future possible conditionals, the verb in the if-clause is in the present tense, and the verb in the result clause is in the future tense.

  o Example: If I have time after finishing my homework tonight, I will call you.

Excerpted from: Verb Tenses: Exercise 3