Conditional Sentences

Conditional sentences or if clauses are used to express that the action in the main clause can only take place if a certain condition is fulfilled. There are three types of conditional sentences:

CONDITIONAL SENTENCE TYPE 1

Form:

If + Present Simple,   Future Simple (will + infinitive)
                         Imperative
                         Modal + base form
Future Simple   +   If Present Simple
The order in the clauses is not important but if the conditional clause appears first, there must be a comma between the clauses.

Uses:

In this type of conditional sentences it is possible and also very likely that the condition will be fulfilled.
Examples:
You will download the attached file if you click twice.
Send Peter an email if you want to contact him.
If your computer if broken, you can use mine.

You can express negative conditions with 'unless' (=a menos que). 'As long as' and 'Providing that' can also be used instead of 'if' (=sólo si).
Unless the weather is bad, I'll play tennis this weekend.
As long as you work hard, you will be successful.
Providing that it isn't too expensive, she'll pay for dinner.

CONDITIONAL SENTENCE TYPE 2

Form:

If + Past Simple,   Would + base form
                         Could/Might + base form
Would (base form) +   if Past Simple

Uses:

In this type of conditional sentences it is possible but very unlikely that the condition will be fulfilled.

Examples:

If they had enough money, they would buy a new car.

If I won the lottery, I could open a restaurant.

If I were you, I would invite her to the party.*

*In written and formal English, we use 'were' instead of 'was' in the first and third person singular.

You can express negative conditions with '**unless**' (=a menos que).

Example: He wouldn't buy a new computer unless he had the money.

Even if can be used to give some emphasis to the conditional clause.

Example: I wouldn't buy a plane even if I was rich.

CONDITIONAL SENTENCE TYPE 3

Form:

If + Past Perfect,	Would have + past participle
	Could have/Might have + past participle
Would have + past participle	if + Past Perfect

Uses:

In this type of conditional sentences it is impossible that the condition will be fulfilled because it refers to the past.

Examples:

If I had read her email, I would have sent her an invitation.

He could have met her if he had gone to the party.

Even if can also be used to give some emphasis to the conditional clause.

Example: We wouldn't have won even if we had trained harder.