Section 17 adverb clauses

pages 233–234

language notes

Students at this level shouldn't have very much difficulty with conditional structures, but some revision may be useful. Some students may be confused because of the misleading rules that they have been taught about 'three kinds of conditional'. And even at this level, a few students may not really understand that past tenses can be used not only to refer to past time, but also to express unreality, indefiniteness, hesitancy etc.

The use of *were* (an old subjunctive) instead of *was* after *if* is still common in formal writing, but is becoming steadily less frequent in speech. Some people believe that *was* is incorrect in this case. This is not true; in modern English it is normal and common in standard speech and writing, especially in an informal style. However, some teachers and examiners may share this belief, so be careful! Note that *were* is still very common in the fixed expression *If I were you.*

possible further activities

Putting things right Invite students to complete the sentence 'If …, the world would be a better place.'

Song titles Do students know, or can they find on the internet, song titles beginning with *if*?

'If'-chains Start with a sentence about the future beginning 'I think …' – for example, 'I think it will rain tomorrow'. Get the class to suggest continuations with *if*. For example:
>   If it rains, I'll stay at home.
>   If it rains, I'll dance in the garden.

Choose one and invite continuations:
>   If I dance in the garden, my neighbours will call the police.
>   If I dance in the garden, I'll get wet. etc

Choose one again, and go on to build up a big *if*-chain.

'You don't really love me.' Get students to complete the following, addressed to anybody of their choice (real or imaginary).
>   You don't love me. If you really loved me, you would …

Who can produce the most ridiculous demand?

Internet (1) Get students to find out which seems to be more common in modern English: "if I was" or "if I were". How much more common? What about "if I was you" and "if I were you"?

Internet (2) Get students to decide which of the following expressions they think are most likely:
>   If cats are people … / If cats were people …
>   If horses can speak … / If horses could speak …
>   If dogs understand … / If dogs understood …

Then get them to check their decisions on the internet.

Personalisation Ask students to write about a turning point in their lives, completing one of these sentences (or something similar):
>   If I had(n't) …, everything would have been different.
>   If I had(n't) …, I would(n't) have …
>   If … hadn't …, I would(n't) be … today.

Story Invite students to write a very short story beginning 'If I hadn't answered the phone …'. Help with vocabulary as necessary.

Internet (3) Get students to find two or three interesting sentences on the internet beginning "If we hadn't".

page 235

language notes

Some languages (e.g. French and German) have 'false friend' expressions which resemble *in case* but are used as equivalents of *if*. This can lead to mistakes:

  *Phone me in case you have any problems.
Note, however, that the expression *in case of* does have an 'if' kind of meaning.

  Break glass in case of fire. (but not **Break the glass in case there's a fire.*)

possible further activities

Regulations Can students think of three or more laws or regulations that can be expressed as follows? Help with vocabulary as necessary.

  You can't … unless you …
This could be done in groups: which group can think of the most?

Inventing regulations Students (perhaps in groups) write regulations for the classroom, beginning 'You can't come in here unless …'.

Crazy insurance Divide the class into groups of three or four. Each group is an insurance company, and it has to advertise three or more crazy insurance policies, each with a title and a description beginning 'in case'. For example:

  Elephant Insurance: In case an elephant breaks into your house.
  Kitten insurance: In case your cat gets pregnant.
If students are short of ideas, make some suggestions, leaving students to decide on the 'in case' part. Possibilities:

  Crocodile Insurance   Floor Insurance   Shoe Insurance
  Red Paint Insurance   Neighbour Insurance
  Exploding Piano Insurance   Flying Fish Insurance
Which group can come up with the craziest set of policies?

pages 236–238

language notes

Students who have learnt not to put *if* and *will/would* together in ordinary conditional sentences may need time to adjust to these uses of *if … will/would* to express willingness or result.

page 239

possible further activities

Advice Tell the class that you have various problems, and ask for advice (written or spoken) beginning 'If I were you'. For example:

  'I'm lonely.' 'If I were you, I'd join a club.'
Help with vocabulary as necessary. Other possible problems:

  I'm tired.   I'm not feeling well.   I don't know what to do this weekend.
  I've just won €10,000 in a lottery.   I need money.   I'm depressed.
  My girlfriend/boyfriend/partner … won't speak to me.   I'm tired of teaching.

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.   → Section 17 continues

possible further activities

100-word stories Students write stories in exactly 100 words, beginning in one of the following ways:
    As I sat reading the paper, …
    Because Sandra refused to listen to me, …
    While Eric was walking down the street, …
Who can write the most terrifying/romantic/surprising story?

possible further activities

'Wherever', 'however' Ask students to complete one or both of the following sentences:
    Wherever you go, you'll find …
    However hard I try, I can't …

language notes

This is another structure that is more common in formal writing than in speech; it occurs very frequently in narrative.
Participle clauses of this kind normally relate to the subject of the main clause:
    Knowing what he was like, **I** was very careful to be polite.
or to the whole of the main clause:
    Alice had a violent row with Peter, completely **ruining** the evening.
Participles in clauses that do not follow this rule are often called 'misrelated participles' or 'dangling/hanging participles' and considered incorrect:
    (*)**Walking** out of the front door, the wind hit her like a blow in the face.
In fact, this is an over-simple prescriptive rule which is not always followed; but students need to pay attention to it in formal writing.

possible further activities

Beginning a story Ask students to write the first sentence of a story, beginning 'Putting down her book, Alice …'. Who can produce the most exciting or unexpected beginning? Ask them to do it again, but this time to produce the most boring possible beginning.

Version of a story Ask students to write a short adaptation of a traditional children's story (e.g. *Red Riding Hood*), using at least five participle clauses. ('… **Opening the door of her grandmother's house**, the little girl saw at once that it was not her grandmother in the bed, but the wolf. **Taking her mobile phone out of her basket**, …')

Finding more examples Ask students to look through an English novel or short story and find five more examples of participle clauses.

Internet Ask students to find interesting sentences on the internet beginning in one or both of the following ways:
    "Running to the door, she"
    "Putting down the phone, he"

possible further activities

Beginning a story Ask students to write the first sentence or two of a story, beginning in one of the following ways:

> On seeing the ghost, …
> After realising that his dog could talk, …
> While travelling in Ireland, …

Who can produce the most exciting or unexpected beginning? Ask them to do it again, but this time to produce the most boring possible beginning.

Beginning a story Ask students to write the first sentence or two of a story, beginning in one of the following ways:

> I walked in the front door, only to find …
> I opened my lunch box, only to find …
> We went up the hotel reception desk, only to find …

Who can produce the most exciting or unexpected beginning? Ask them to do it again, but this time to produce the most boring possible beginning.