# CONDITIONAL CLAUSES

## CEFR Level C2 — Mastery

English Language Worksheets | 4 Worksheets + Answer Key

## Worksheet 1: The Conditional as a Rhetorical Instrument

At C2, conditionals shape emphasis, irony and argumentative force.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

### Rhetorical uses of the conditional

| Device | Effect | Example |
|---|---|---|
| rhetorical / concessive if | Concede a point only to override it | “If the plan is bold, it is also reckless.” |
| cumulative inverted conditionals | Parallel ‘Were it … / Had it …’ for climax | “Were it cheaper, were it faster, one might forgive it.” |
| counterfactual irony | A hypothetical exposes an absurdity | “Had honesty been a requirement, the post would be vacant.” |
| ellipsis / ‘if so / if not’ | Compress a whole condition to two words | “Is the claim proven? If so, act; if not, wait.” |
| ‘if’ of politeness / hedging | Soften an assertion or request | “If I might venture a comment …” |
| ‘what if’ provocation | Open a speculative line of argument | “What if the premise itself is mistaken?” |

**PART A** — **Identify the device**

Name the device in each sentence and explain its rhetorical effect in context.

1. “Were the evidence merely thin, we might overlook it; were it merely dated, we might excuse it — but it is neither.”
*Context: a legal opinion*

Device: _____ Effect: _____

2. “Had competence been the criterion, half the board would never have been appointed.”
*Context: a satirical column*

Device: _____ Effect: _____

3. “If the reform is imperfect, it is at least a beginning.”
*Context: an editorial*

Device: _____ Effect: _____

4. “What if the shortage is not a failure of supply, but of imagination?”
*Context: a keynote address*

Device: _____ Effect: _____

**PART B** — **Transform for effect**

Rewrite each sentence using the device indicated. The effect must be deliberate.

**1** Original: “The scheme is expensive, but it fails to deliver.”
Device: concessive ‘if’
→ _____

**2** Original: “Without her testimony, and without the documents, the case would collapse.”
Device: cumulative inverted conditionals
→ _____

**3** Original: “If that is true, we must act; if it is false, we must wait.”
Device: ellipsis (‘if so / if not’)
→ _____

**Score: _____ / 14**

## Worksheet 2: Precision — Fine Distinctions in Conditionals

Mastery means controlling probability, distance and implication exactly.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

**PART A** — **Study the distinctions**

| Contrast | Distinction |
|---|---|
| if vs even if | 'if' = result depends on the condition; 'even if' = result holds regardless |
| unless vs if not | near-synonyms, but 'unless' resists non-real/hypothetical negatives |
| provided vs as long as | 'provided' stresses a stipulation; 'as long as' adds duration |
| were to vs should | 'were to' = pure hypothesis; 'should' = a real but unlikely chance |
| but for vs without | 'but for' is formal + counterfactual; 'without' is broader |

Precision cloze: complete each sentence with the ONE option whose logic and register fit exactly. Choose from the pairs above.

1. The guarantee holds _____ the product is used as directed.
2. _____ the slightest error to appear, the whole proof would fail.
3. We would have missed the train _____ your quick thinking.
4. _____ they double our salaries, we won't renew the contract.
5. The bridge is safe _____ the load stays under fifty tonnes.
6. _____ the minister to resign, an election would follow.
7. You cannot enter _____ you have a valid ticket.
8. _____ the intervention of the courts, the law would already be in force.

**PART B** — **Defend your choice**

For the sentences using 'Were', 'but for' and 'even if', explain in one sentence each why the nearest rival option would fail.

**'Were' sentence:**

_____

_____

**'but for' sentence:**

_____

_____

**'even if' sentence:**

_____

_____

**Score: _____ / 14**

## Worksheet 3: Style Analysis & Rewriting

How conditionals carry argument, cadence and concealed judgement.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

**PART A** — **Analytical reading**

> *If the minister is to be believed — and that, admittedly, is a considerable 'if' — the shortfall was nobody's fault. Had the forecasts been accurate, the budget would have balanced; had the winter been milder, demand would have fallen; had the markets stayed calm, borrowing would have been cheaper. Each excuse is individually plausible and collectively suspicious, for if every adverse event conspired at once, one begins to wonder whether prudence played any part at all. Were a private firm to account for itself so, its directors would be replaced by lunchtime. The public, however, is offered a gentler remedy: another review, another forecast, and — should the stars align — another promise.*

**1. Identify FIVE conditional structures and classify each.**

_____

_____

_____

**2. Analyse the rhetorical effect of the three parallel 'Had … would have …' clauses.**

_____

_____

**3. 'Were a private firm to account for itself so, its directors would be replaced by lunchtime.' How does this counterfactual work as criticism?**

_____

_____

**4. In one sentence: what judgement does the writer pass on the minister without stating it?**

_____

_____

**PART B** — **Neutralise the style**

Rewrite the passage's argument as three neutral, non-ironic sentences of official explanation, stripping the rhetorical conditionals. Then note in one sentence what is lost.

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_____

_____

_____

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_____

What is lost: _____

**Score: _____ / 16**

## Worksheet 4: Extended Writing — The Architecture of Hypothesis

Deploy the full conditional repertoire with deliberate, controlled effect.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

**PART A** **The task**

Write a persuasive or satirical passage (200–250 words) on a proposition of your choosing. Requirements: at least SIX distinct conditional structures, of which at least ONE cumulative/parallel inversion and ONE counterfactual used ironically; a consistent register (academic, journalistic, or literary). Underline each target structure.

| Self-check before submitting | ✓ |
|---|---|
| Six or more distinct conditional structures, each underlined | |
| At least one cumulative/parallel inverted conditional | |
| At least one ironic counterfactual | |
| Modality (would / might / could) chosen for precise effect | |
| No ‘would’ in any if-clause; tense sequences intact | |
| Register consistent from first line to last | |

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Word count: _____ Structures underlined: _____ / 6

**Score: _____ / 35**

# ANSWER KEY & TEACHER NOTES

## For teacher use only — C2 Level Worksheets

Conditional Clauses | English Language Worksheets

### Worksheet 1 – Rhetorical Devices

| # | Question / Item | Answer / Guidance |
|---|---|---|
| **A1** | 'Were the evidence merely thin …' | **Cumulative inverted conditionals — parallel hypotheticals build to a flat refutation ('but it is neither'), amplifying the indictment** |
| **A2** | 'Had competence been the criterion …' | **Counterfactual irony — an unreal condition exposes a real failing (the board is not competent)** |
| **A3** | 'If the reform is imperfect …' | **Concessive 'if' — grants the flaw only to reframe it positively ('at least a beginning')** |
| **A4** | 'What if the shortage …' | **'What if' provocation — reframes the problem and invites the audience to rethink the premise** |
| **B1** | concessive if | **e.g. 'If the scheme is expensive, it is also ineffective.'** |
| **B2** | cumulative inversion | **e.g. 'Were her testimony absent, were the documents lost, the case would collapse.'** |
| **B3** | ellipsis | **e.g. 'Is it true? If so, we must act; if not, we must wait.'** |

### Worksheet 2 – Precision Cloze

| # | Question / Item | Answer / Guidance |
|---|---|---|
| **A** | Gaps 1–8 in order | **1 provided (that) / as long as, 2 Were, 3 but for, 4 Even if, 5 as long as / provided (that), 6 Were, 7 unless, 8 But for** |
| **B ( Were)** | were to vs should | **'Were the minister to resign' frames a pure hypothesis; 'should' would imply a real, if unlikely, chance rather than a thought experiment** |
| **B (but for)** | but for vs without | **'But for' is formal and strictly counterfactual (it did happen, and only that prevented the outcome); 'without' is broader and less precise about the counterfactual force** |
| **B (even if)** | even if vs if | **'Even if they double our salaries' concedes the maximal case and still refuses; plain 'if' would make renewal depend on the raise rather than rule it out** |

### Worksheet 3 – Style Analysis

| # | Question / Item | Answer / Guidance |
|---|---|---|
| **Q1** | Five structures + types | **'If the minister is to be believed' (open/'be to' condition); three 'Had … would have …' (inverted 3rd conditionals); 'if every adverse event conspired at once' (2nd/hypothetical); 'Were a private firm to account …, its directors would be replaced' (inverted 'were to'); 'should the stars align' (inverted, ironic)** |
| **Q2** | three parallel 'Had …' clauses | **The anaphora piles up excuses in identical form; the very symmetry makes them look rehearsed and collectively implausible — the structure does the discrediting** |

| # | Question / Item | Answer / Guidance |
|---|---|---|
| **Q3** | private-firm counterfactual | **It applies a real-world standard to a hypothetical: measured against private accountability, the minister's conduct would be instantly punished — the gap indicts the public sector's leniency** |
| **Q4** | implied judgement | **The minister is evading responsibility and the string of 'bad luck' masks a failure of prudence — stated nowhere directly, but unmistakable** |
| **B** | Neutral rewrite | **e.g. 'The shortfall resulted from inaccurate forecasts, an unusually cold winter, and volatile markets. The government will commission a review. Further measures may follow.' Lost: irony, cadence and the concealed accusation of incompetence** |

## Worksheet 4 – Extended Writing Rubric

| Criterion | Descriptor | Marks |
|---|---|---|
| Structural range | Six or more distinct conditional structures, deliberately deployed and underlined | 0–8 |
| Advanced structures | Cumulative inversion + ironic counterfactual, both effective | 0–8 |
| Register & modality | Register sustained; modal choices precise | 0–7 |
| Accuracy | Tense sequence, inversion and if-clause form all error-free | 0–6 |
| Effect | The passage genuinely persuades or amuses; hypothesis earns its place | 0–6 |