

Conditional sentences III

Spanish · British English › Spanish

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The Spanish Type 3 Conditional: What If... (Unreal Past)

Hello! Today, we're diving into the Spanish Type 3 Conditional, a crucial but sometimes tricky structure. It's used to talk about hypothetical situations in the past that didn't actually happen, and consequently, their results also never materialised. Think of it as playing a game of 'what if' with history!

The key is understanding that this conditional refers to events that are now unchangeable. We're imagining what would have happened if the past had unfolded differently. It's often used to express regret, criticism, or simply to speculate about alternative past outcomes.

Si + Pluperfect Subjunctive, Compound Conditional

Let's look at how to form these tenses:

Subject Pronoun	Pluperfect Subjunctive (haber + past participle)
yo	hubiera/hubiese hablado/comido/vivido
tú	hubieras/hubieses hablado/comido/vivido
él/ella/usted	hubiera/hubiese hablado/comido/vivido
nosotros/as	hubiéramos/hubiésemos hablado/comido/vivido
vosotros/as	hubierais/hubieseis hablado/comido/vivido
ellos/ellas/ustedes	hubieran/hubiesen hablado/comido/vivido
Subject Pronoun	Compound Conditional (haber + past participle)
yo	habría hablado/comido/vivido
tú	habrías hablado/comido/vivido
él/ella/usted	habría hablado/comido/vivido
nosotros/as	habríamos hablado/comido/vivido
vosotros/as	habríais hablado/comido/vivido
ellos/ellas/ustedes	habrían hablado/comido/vivido

Si hubieras estudiado más, habrías aprobado el examen.

If you had studied more, you would have passed the exam.

Note that in the Type 3 conditional, there are two possibilities for the main clause. Most commonly, we use the **Compound Conditional**, but in certain contexts, especially when expressing regret, wishes, or criticism about the past, we can also use the **Pluperfect Subjunctive** in the main clause. This is less formal and more common in spoken Spanish.

Si hubiéramos sabido la verdad, hubiéramos actuado diferente.

If we had known the truth, we would have acted differently.

Watch out! A common blunder! Never use the **Condicional** (neither *Condicional Simple* nor *Condicional Compuesto*) directly after **si** in conditional clauses! Always use the **Pluperfect Subjunctive** for impossible past conditions.

Remember this golden rule: "**Si + hubiera, habría**" or "**Si + hubiera, hubiera**". It's the key to unlocking the Type 3 Conditional!

- Expressing regret or disappointment about something that happened (or didn't happen) in the past.
- Criticising past actions (your own or others').
- Speculating about unreal past scenarios that would have led to different consequences.

Ella no habría conocido a Juan si no hubiera ido a esa fiesta.

She wouldn't have met Juan if she hadn't gone to that party.

Remember, practice makes perfect! The more you create and hear these structures, the more natural they'll become for you. ¡Mucho ánimo!

Part 1 – Choose the correct word

Circle the option that correctly fills each gap.

1. Si no _____, no _____ tantos problemas.

If you hadn't lied, you wouldn't have had so many problems.

Gap 1: A) hubieras mentido B) habías mentido C) habrías mentido D) mientas

Gap 2: A) habrías tenido B) habrás tenido C) has tenido D) habías tenido

2. No _____ tarde si _____ a tiempo.

We wouldn't have been late if we had left on time.

Gap 1: A) habíamos llegado B) hemos llegado C) habremos llegado D) habríamos llegado

Gap 2: A) habíamos salido B) hubiéramos salido C) hayamos salido D) habríamos salido

3. Él no _____ la verdad aquel día si no se la _____.

He wouldn't have known the truth that day if you hadn't told him.

Gap 1: A) había sabido B) habría sabido C) sabría D) habrá sabido

Gap 2: A) hubieras contado B) hayas contado C) habrías contado D) habías contado

4. Si no _____, no _____ mesa.

If we hadn't booked, we wouldn't have got a table.

Gap 1: A) habríamos reservado B) reserváramos C) habíamos reservado D) hubiéramos reservado

Gap 2: A) hemos conseguido B) habremos conseguido C) habíamos conseguido D) habríamos conseguido

5. Si _____ venir, _____ genial.

If you had been able to come, it would have been great.

Gap 1: A) podías B) podrías C) habías podido D) hubieras podido

Gap 2: A) habrá sido B) habría sido C) ha sido D) había sido

6. Ella _____ el empleo si _____ más experiencia.

She would have got the job if she had had more experience.

Gap 1: A) habría conseguido B) había conseguido C) habrá conseguido D) ha conseguido

Gap 2: A) habría tenido B) había tenido C) hubiera tenido D) haya tenido

7. Si te _____, no _____ el error.

If we had believed you, we wouldn't have made the mistake.

Gap 1: A) habíamos creído B) creeríamos C) hubiéramos creído D) habríamos creído

Gap 2: A) habíamos cometido B) habríamos cometido C) habremos cometido D) hemos cometido

8. Él _____ el partido si no se _____.

He would have won the match if he hadn't got injured.

Gap 1: A) ha ganado B) había ganado C) habría ganado D) habrá ganado

Gap 2: A) hubiera lesionado B) haya lesionado C) habría lesionado D) había lesionado

Part 2 – Fill in the gap

Write the missing word or phrase on the line.

1. Si _____ el riesgo, no _____.

If we had known the risk, we wouldn't have invested.

2. Ella no _____ a Juan si no _____ a esa fiesta.

She wouldn't have met Juan if she hadn't gone to that party.

3. Si _____ ayuda, te la _____.

If you had asked for help, we would have given it to you.

4. Si no _____ tanto frío, _____ a la playa.

If it hadn't been so cold, we would have gone to the beach.

5. Si la oferta _____ mejor, la _____.

If the offer had been better, we would have accepted it.

6. Él _____ la propuesta si le _____ más.

He would have accepted the offer if they had paid him more.

Part 3 – Translate

Write each word in Spanish on the line.

1. to have come › _____

2. to have travelled › _____

3. to have barked › _____

4. to have said › _____

5. to have decided › _____

6. to solve › _____

Part 4 – Match the pairs

Write the letter of the matching translation next to each term.

Term

Translation

-
- | | | | |
|----|------------------|---|-------------------|
| 1. | haber practicado | A | to have learned |
| 2. | haber traído | B | to have practised |
| 3. | hablar | C | to have visited |
| 4. | haber escuchado | D | to have listened |
| 5. | haber aprendido | E | to talk |
| 6. | haber comprado | F | to buy |
| 7. | haber visitado | G | to have brought |
| 8. | haber reservado | H | to have booked |

Answer Key

Part 1 – Choose the correct word

- Gap 1: A) hubieras mentido; Gap 2: A) habrías tenido
- Gap 1: D) habríamos llegado; Gap 2: B) hubiéramos salido
- Gap 1: B) habría sabido; Gap 2: A) hubieras contado
- Gap 1: D) hubiéramos reservado; Gap 2: D) habríamos conseguido
- Gap 1: D) hubieras podido; Gap 2: B) habría sido
- Gap 1: A) habría conseguido; Gap 2: C) hubiera tenido
- Gap 1: C) hubiéramos creído; Gap 2: B) habríamos cometido
- Gap 1: C) habría ganado; Gap 2: A) hubiera lesionado

Part 2 – Fill in the gap

- hubiéramos sabido; habríamos invertido
- habría conocido; hubiera ido
- hubieras pedido; habríamos dado
- hubiese hecho; habríamos ido
- hubiese sido; habríamos aceptado
- habría aceptado; hubieran pagado

Part 3 – Translate

- haber venido
- haber viajado
- haber ladrado
- haber dicho
- haber decidido
- haber resuelto

Part 4 – Match the pairs

- B (to have practised)
- G (to have brought)
- E (to talk)
- D (to have listened)
- A (to have learned)
- F (to buy)
- C (to have visited)
- H (to have booked)