Conditionals: other expressions (*unless, should, as long as*)

from [English Grammar Today](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/english-grammar-today/)

***Unless***

Conditional clauses can begin with *unless*. *Unless* means something similar to ‘if … not’ or ‘except if’.

The verb forms in the examples are similar to sentences with *if*: we use the present simple in the *unless*-clause and *shall, should, will, would, can, could, may* or *might* in the main clause:

***Unless****I****phone****you, you****can****assume the train’s on time.* (If I do not phone you /except if I phone you, you can assume the train is on time.)

**Warning:**

We don’t use *unless* for impossible conditions:

***If****the government had****not****raised food prices, there would not have been so many protests.*

Not: ~~Unless the government had raised food prices~~ …

**Warning:**

We don’t use *unless* and *if* together:

*We’ll go to the coast tomorrow****unless****it rains.*

Not: ~~We’ll go to the coast tomorrow unless if it rains~~.

**See also:**

* [***Unless***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/unless)
* [***If so*, *if not***](http://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/if#if__3)

***Should you* (*Should* with inversion)**

In formal situations, we can use *should* + subject (s) + verb (v) instead of *if*:

***Should******you****wish to cancel your order, please contact our customer service department on 02317 6658932.* (or *If you should wish to cancel your order* …)

***Had you* (*Had* with inversion)**

In formal situations, we can use *had +* subject + verb instead of *if* in third conditional sentences:

***Had******I****known you were waiting outside, I would have invited you to come in.* (If I had known you were waiting outside …)

***If* + *were to***

In formal situations, we can use *if + were to* when we talk about things that might happen but which we think are unlikely:

***If****the Prime Minister****were to****resign, there would have to be a general election within 30 days.*

In even more formal styles, we use *were* + subject-verb inversion + *to-*infinitive:

[V]***Were***[S]***we***[to -INF]***to give up****the fight now, it would mean the end of democracy in our country.* (If we gave up the fight now …)

***As long as*, *so long as*, *providing*, etc.**

Sometimes we need to impose specific conditions or set limits on a situation. In these cases, conditional clauses can begin with phrases such as ***as long as, so long as, only if, on condition that, providing (that*), *provided (that*).**

*As long as* is more common in speaking; *so long as* and *on condition that* are more formal and more common in writing:

[to a group of children]

*You can play in the living room****as long as****you don’t make a mess.*

***So long as****a tiger stands still, it is invisible in the jungle.*

*The bank lent the company 100,000 pounds****on condition that****they repaid the money within six months.*

***Providing (that*)** is more common in speaking; ***provided (that*)** is more formal and more common in written language:

[talking about rail travel in the UK]

*You can get a senior citizen’s reduction****providing****you’ve got a railcard.*

*They may do whatever they like****provided that****it is within the law.*

***Or* and *otherwise***

We often use ***or***and ***otherwise*** with conditional meanings:

*You’ve got to start studying,****or****you’ll fail all those exams.* (If you don’t start studying, you will fail the exams.)

[talking about sending a package by mail]

*We’d better send it express,****otherwise****it’ll take days.* (If we do not send it express, it will take days.)

***Supposing***

*Supposing* may be used with a conditional meaning. It can be used in first, second or third conditional sentences. The speaker invites the listener to imagine a situation:

***Supposing****I don’t arrive till after midnight, will the guest-house still be open?*(Imagine if I don’t arrive till after midnight …)

***Supposing****you lost your passport, you’d have to go to the embassy, wouldn’t you?*

***Supposing****he hadn’t recognised us – he might never have spoken to us.*