

Chapter 33: Conditions

Chapter 33 covers the following: the formation and use of conditions (e.g. “if” clauses) in Latin. At the end of the lesson we’ll review the vocabulary which you should memorize in this chapter.

There are three important rules to remember in this chapter: (1) In Latin, the subordinating conjunctions *si* (“if”) and *nisi* (“if ... not, unless”) introduce conditions. (2) The two halves of a condition are called the protasis — that’s the “if” part — and the apodosis, the “then” part. (3) The less “real” a condition — that is, the more it describes a situation that doesn’t reflect reality — the more likely it is to use the subjunctive mood.

Let’s start by introducing the new terms presented in this chapter, which centers on how to form “if ... then” statements in Latin, a type of construction grammarians call a “condition.”

Conditions come in two parts: a protasis, the “if” half — it means literally in Greek “placed” (-*tas*-) “before” (*pro*-) — and an apodosis, the “then” half, meaning literally “put” (-*do*-) “after” (*apo*-). There are three general types of condition: (1) those which center on simple facts and general rules, for example, “If you want me, I’m there!” [Always, it’s a rule, count on me being there!]; (2) those which involve future events, “If you call me, I’ll be there!” [Okay, maybe I’m not there now but I promise I’ll be there in the future.]; (3) those which entail things which didn’t or aren’t happening, in other words, speculations: “If you had called me, I would have been there!” [But you didn’t, which is why I didn’t come.]

Each of those types breaks down into two sub-types. Simple fact conditions can describe present or past actions. Future conditions can envision the upcoming situation as likely to happen — grammarians call that “future more vivid”— or can see it as possible but not all that likely. That’s called “future less vivid” because the speaker sees the possibility of what the condition describes as being a bit blurry, not “clear, vivid.” Finally, contrary-to-fact conditions describe unreal things that are happening now — or aren’t — or happened in the past — or didn’t — thus present and past contrary-to-fact. The total, then, is six distinct types of condition, all defined by the tense and mood of their verb.

In Latin, the tense and mood of the verbs in the two parts of any particular type of condition are always the same. In other words, Latin conditions are balanced. The protasis and apodosis will always be the same in tense and mood. English? Not so much. Some English conditions are balanced, but most aren’t. The majority uses different verb forms in the two halves. And one more thing to note. In actual practice, conditions in both English and Latin are often “mixed,” which means the protasis will belong to one type of condition, and the apodosis another. In this course, however, you won’t see mixed conditions. Latin’s challenging enough when the conditions are balanced. Let’s leave it at that. Eventually, however, when we get to reading the real stuff where we can’t avoid mixed conditions, we’ll address them then. In the meantime, you can expect to encounter only pure conditions where both halves belong to the same type.

If there’s a guiding principle to conditions in Latin, it’s that “real” ones, those which describe events the speaker or writer feels did or could be taking place, these “real” conditions have verbs in the indicative mood. Conversely, “unreal” conditions use the subjunctive. Thus, conditions are a construction where the subjunctive mood retains its original sense of uncertainty. And take

note of something else. Not since we studied the jussive subjunctive back in Chapter 28 have we encountered a subjunctive acting as the main verb of a sentence. All the other uses we've covered have involved a subjunctive verb in a subordinate clause. But now here half the conditions, as you're about to find out, require a subjunctive as the main verb of the sentence. Why? Because those conditions involve a sense of uncertainty, the subjunctive's primordial connotation. So get ready to see subjunctive main verbs again, but in a new way, as part of a conditional statement.

Given all this, you won't be surprised to learn that Latin conditions have been arranged into a hierarchy that distinguishes real conditions (those which express actual situations according to the speaker or writer) from unreal (those which convey speculations or doubtful circumstances). These are differentiated in Latin by the use of the indicative mood for real conditions and subjunctive for unreal ones. In some cases conditional types are also broken down into present and past. That's confusing, isn't it?

Let's make a chart — We've done so many charts! Why stop now? — where we'll write the protasis (the "if" part of the condition) in orange and the apodosis (the "then" part) in green. Here are the three general types of condition in Latin: simple fact, future and contrary-to-fact, with indicative forms in purple and subjunctives in red. The first type of condition is also the simplest: Present Simple Fact, which uses present indicative verbs in both halves of the condition, for example, "If they call me, I am there." [It's a rule: they call, I jump. Count on it.] As Wheelock notes on page 156, footnote 1, an imperative or jussive subjunctive can sometimes replace the present indicative in the apodosis: "If they call, go there!" or "... let us go there!" Put both verbs into any past indicative form — preferably, the perfect or imperfect tense — and it becomes a Past Simple Fact condition, "If they called me, I was there." Now it's a rule that was in force in the past.

Make both verbs future indicative and the result is a Future More Vivid condition, "If they call me, I will be there." Note an oddity in our way of expressing this condition. In the protasis English uses the present tense to represent what is technically future action. In other words, we don't say "If they *will* call me (future tense), I will be there," but "If they *call* me (present tense), I will be there." The present tense in the English protasis here shows generalized action, action that could take place at any time. Like in a present simple fact condition, the present presents a rule: for instance, "If it rains, I don't play tennis." Rain? Me? Tennis? Nope. That's the rule. "However, if it rains next Tuesday, I won't play tennis." The rule applies to the future as much as it does to the present, so it's natural to state the protasis (the rule) in the present tense the way we normally do, but to state the apodosis in the future because I'm talking about a specific future circumstance, next Tuesday and its potential bad weather. That's the way we do things; it's not the Roman way. The Romans used the future in *both* halves of the condition, because it's logical to express a future action in the future, all of which adds up to one minor difference of linguistic habit, but you have to know it. Where Latin says "if he will come..." English says "if he does come ..." That means, if you see a future indicative protasis in Latin, you will have to translate it as an English present-tense form, or vice versa. [Catch that? "If you *see* ..., you *will* have to ..."] Present tense in the English, future in the Latin. *Si comprehendes, non errabis!* Or to put it another way, "If you do this for me, your godfather will be happy." Note also that sometimes the Romans used the future perfect in the protasis of future more vivid conditions, — "If they will

have called me, I will come” — which is not really very much of a change since the future perfect takes place a half step into the future. It *is* future, just not as future as the future. Wanna know more about this? See Wheelock, page 156, footnote 2.

Now, here comes the big change. We’ve run through all the tenses of the indicative, which means Latin has only the subjunctive left. [Conditions have to use finite verbs, so infinitives and participles won’t work here.] Thus, all three remaining types of condition use the subjunctive to express unreal or unlikely situations. The first of these is the Future Less Vivid which deploys the present subjunctive in both halves of the condition. Its English counterpart is “should ... would,” as in “If they should call me, I would come.” [Doesn’t seem to me all that likely they will call, but if they do, fine, I’ll go, but I’m not cancelling my hair appointment.]

The next type of condition crosses another boundary, that between fact — the future less vivid which is, however improbable, still a possible fact — and what is absolutely certain uncertainty: “I know this is not true, but what if it were? How would that change things? Would you feel any different about it?” Speculation of that sort is an important aspect of human life, an essential ingredient in our ability to see things from all possible — or even impossible — perspectives. Those “unreal” conditions come in two basic types, both of which naturally employ the subjunctive and are differentiated only by their tense. The first type is the Present Contrary-To-Fact which in Latin uses the imperfect subjunctive corresponding to “were ... would” in English, as in “If they were calling me, I would be there.” [But they’re not, so I’m not. Look! Even if my actions make me seem disloyal or lazy or whatever, I’m not. The reality is, they haven’t called me and I’m a good person.] Note that “unreal” conditions almost always hide “real” facts beneath their fictional façades so they’re really only unreal on the surface. They’re more often than not facts disguised as fictions. Notice also that English doesn’t use the same form in the protasis and apodosis the way Latin does. That is, where we say “were ... would,” Latin uses the imperfect subjunctive in both halves.

And one more thing to note here is the close affinity between English “were” and the Latin imperfect which is often translated as “were.” That makes the formula for this construction all the easier to memorize, doesn’t it? Turn those imperfect subjunctives into pluperfects, and you have the last condition in Latin, the Past Contrary-To-Fact, “If they had called me, I would have been there.” Again, English uses different words in the protasis and apodosis, where Latin doesn’t. And again the English formula, in this case using “had,” corresponds closely with the Latin pluperfect, most often translated as “had,” making the memorization of this formula, too, just that much easier.

Finally, conditions in Latin are introduced by two subordinating conjunctions which you need to learn and memorize as soon as possible. For the positive, Latin uses *si* (“if”) for example, *si me vocat, venio*, meaning “if he calls me, I come.” For the negative, it uses *nisi* (“if ... not, unless”), as in *nisi me vocat, non venio*, meaning “if he doesn’t call me, I don’t come” — or “unless he calls me, I don’t come.”

And now that we have finished studying conditions, there’s one last thing to note. Conditions require a new type of grammar question. When referring to the main verbs used in the protases and apodoses of conditions, I can now ask you “What tense and mood and why?” For instance,

in the sentence *si remaneas, felix sim*, meaning “if you should remain, I would be happy,” if I were to underline *remaneas* and ask you “What tense and mood and why?” what should you say? Good! “Present subjunctive, future less vivid.” And if you add “in the protasis,” you will make me even future-more-vividly happier. If I should underline *sim* in that same sentence, what would you say? The same thing! “Present subjunctive, future less vivid.” Add “in the apodosis” and watch me smile *felicissimē*. In any case, it’s nice but not necessary to say protasis or apodosis, because there’s no difference in basic grammar since both halves of the condition are formed the same way. If you translate the condition correctly and identify the tense and mood of the verb in either half, I can see you understand the condition. [And that’s a present simple fact condition, isn’t it, which means it’s a rule!]

Let’s practice the formulas for conditions, using the examples Mr. Wheelock provides on page 157. First, *Si hoc dicet, errabit*, meaning “If he says this, he will be wrong.” What type of condition is this? What tense and mood are the verbs *dicet* and *errabit*? Future indicative. Both of them. So the condition is ... future more vivid. You can abbreviate that “fmv.” Next example: *Si hoc dicit, errat*, which means “If he says this, he is wrong.” What’s the tense and mood of the two verbs here? Present indicative. So what type of condition is this? Present simple fact, or if you prefer to use an abbreviation, “pres sf,”

3. *Si hoc dixisset, erravisset*: “If he had said this, he would have been wrong.” Tense and mood? Pluperfect subjunctive. And so what type of condition? Past contrary-to-fact. “Past ctf” if you like. 4. *Si hoc dicat, erret*: “If he should say this, he would be wrong.” Tense and mood? Present subjunctive. What type of condition? Future less vivid, which you can abbreviate “flv.” 5. *Si hoc dixit, erravit*: “If he said this, he was wrong.” Tense and mood? Perfect indicative. What type of condition? Past simple fact, or “past sf.” 6. *Si hoc diceret, erraret*: “If he were saying this, he would be wrong.” Tense and mood? Imperfect subjunctive. What type of condition? Present contrary-to-fact, or if you abbreviate it, “pres ctf.”

That was one example of each type of condition. Let’s look at few more examples using a different thought. 7. *Si veniat, hoc videat*: “If he should come, he would see this.” Tense and mood? Present subjunctive. What type of condition? flv (future less vivid). 8. *Si vēnit, hoc vidit*: “If he came, he saw this.” Tense and mood? Perfect indicative. What type of condition? Past sf (simple fact). 9. *Si veniret, hoc videret*: “If he were coming, he would see this.” Tense and mood? Imperfect subjunctive. What type of condition? Present ctf (contrary-to-fact). 10. *Si veniet, hoc videbit*: “If he comes, he will see this.” Tense and mood? Future indicative. What type of condition? fmv (future more vivid). And finally 11. *Si venisset, hoc vidisset*: “If he had come, he would have seen this.” Tense and mood? Pluperfect subjunctive. What type of condition? Past ctf.

And that’s it for the grammar in this chapter. Now let’s look at the vocabulary. The first word is *nox, noctis, f.*, meaning “night.” It’s a third-declension feminine noun, and it has two consonants at the end of its base (-ct-) so it’s *i*-stem. What’s its genitive plural then? That’s right: *noctium*. Next is another third-declension feminine noun, *ops, opis*, meaning “help, aid,” but this noun’s not *i*-stem since it has only one consonant (-p-) at the end of its base. Its plural, *opes, opum*, has a slightly different sense: “power, resources, wealth.” To the Romans, people who had lots of “help’s” (i.e. resources) had power, and since money is power, wealth. So how would Latin say

“with wealth”? [What usage does “with” connote here? “Along with”? No. Wealth isn’t a person. It’s a thing. “With” with a thing, a tool like “wealth,” shows ... means. And what case is used to show means? The ablative, using what preposition? Hah, trick question! No preposition. So “with wealth” would be ... *Opibus*. Remember: the plural means “wealth.”

After this comes *salus, salutis, f.*, meaning “health, safety; greeting,” another third-declension feminine noun, that’s also not *i*-stem. In its “greeting” sense, *salus* gave us our words “salute, salutations,” all originally wishes for good health. How then would Latin say “I send (literally, speak) very many greetings”? In other words, “I wish (you) best health.” This is a common sign-off used at the end of Roman letters. [Let’s start with “very many”? How does Latin say that? What degree do you use to say “very” in Latin? The superlative. So what’s the superlative of *multus*? *Multus, plus, ...?*] *Plurimus*. So, literally “I speak very much health”? ... [Use the singular!] ... is *Salutem plurimam dico*, which the Romans sometimes abbreviated as “*s.p.d.*”

The next word is one you already know, *quis, quid*, meaning “who?, what?,” the interrogative pronoun. But under certain conditions it can mean “anyone, anything, someone, something.” Learn this poem: “After *si, nisi, num*, and *ne / ali-* takes a holiday.” [Or “... all the *ali*’s go away.”] So after those words, *quis* doesn’t mean “who?” but “someone, anyone.” So how does Latin say “If anyone ...”? *Si quis ...*, not *si aliquis*. And what about “... lest we find anyone here,” in other words, “so that we don’t find anyone here”? ... *ne quem* — not *aliquem!* — *hīc inveniamus*.

The next word is *ullus, -a, -um*, meaning “any, anyone, anything.” It’s a first/second-declension adjective, which you’ve already learned, way back in Chapter 9 when we studied its negative, *nullus, -a, -um*, meaning “no, not any.” Like many pronouns and related forms, the genitive singular (“of anyone”) is *ullius* and its dative singular (“to anyone”) *ulli*. Remember that pronominal forms like these — and that includes *hic, is, iste, ille, ipse, solus, totus, unus, alius* and *alter* — all have genitive singulars ending *-ius* and dative singulars ending *-i*.

Next up is the subordinating conjunction *si*, meaning “if, in case,” followed by *nisi*, meaning “if ... not, unless; except,” the negative correlative conjunction of *si*. If *nisi* doesn’t introduce the protasis of a condition — which is its major use by far! — it means “except, but” and serves as a conjunction of sorts. When that happens, the two things being connected by *nisi* are put in the same case. That is, *nisi* acts like *quam*, the *quam* used with comparatives, the one that means “than.” Here’s a well-known example: *Nil nisi bonum*, meaning “nothing except/but good.” The full expression is *Dic nil nisi bonum de mortuis*, that is “Say nothing except good about the dead.” In other words, don’t speak ill of people who can’t fight back! Note that *bonum* is accusative here because *nil* is accusative.

The next word is a verb, *suscipio, suscipere, suscepi, susceptum*, meaning “undertake.” It’s third-*io*, just like *capio*, the verb it’s based on. It’s a compound of *sub-* (“under”) and *capio* (“take”), literally “undertake.” In all of Latin, that has got to be the easiest verb definition for English speakers to learn! How would Latin say “I will have undertaken”? [Tense? Future perfect. So you use which principal part? The third. Thus, the answer is ...] *suscepero*. And what about “I have undertaken (S)”)? Good, *susceperim*. The first person is the one place where the perfect active subjunctive and future perfect active indicative differ.

Here's another verb: *trado, tradere, tradidi, traditum*, meaning "give over, surrender; hand down, transmit." This one's third-conjugation. Literally, it means *trans-* ("across") plus *do* ("give, put"). Note the radically different meanings: "surrender" versus "transmit." Context — and most often that means the direct object — will dictate which sense this verb has in a particular sentence. If the sense of the sentence is negative, *trado* usually means "surrender, turn over, betray." So if you "*tradis*" your friends, you're betraying them. If, however, the sense is positive, then *trado* means "hand down, bestow," like learning or wealth, the good things you get from your ancestors. How does Latin say "to be surrendered," the present passive infinitive? Yeah, that's right. This is the infinitive that loses its *-r-*: *tradi*. Horrible thing!

Next on the menu is *cena, -ae, f.*, meaning "dinner." It's a first-declension feminine noun. *Et post cenam iucundissimam, quam sentis?*

Plenus, -a, -um, of course, meaning "full," a first/second-declension adjective, which can take a genitive after it (in the sense "full of...") or an ablative (in the sense "filled with..."). We've noted several times already how English /f/ is cognate with Latin /p/? So what's the English cognate of *pl(enus)*? [Just use *pl-*. Put a vowel between the consonants, and you get ...] "full, fill." "Full" and *plenus* were once the same word, way back in Indo-European times.

And the last word on this vocabulary list is far and away the easiest: *certē*, meaning "certainly." It's an adverb, so no declension or conjugation or expectation! And we already met its adjective form, *certus*, in Chapter 19. In fact, I used *certē*, the adverb of *certus*, as an example in the previous chapter. I *certē* wish all the vocabulary in Latin were so easy!

Do the rules that were cited at the beginning of this chapter now make sense to you? If not, please review this presentation. If so, please proceed to the next slide.

For the next class meeting, please bring in a copy of the worksheet for Chapter 33. Here's a link to that worksheet.

Now say after me: "After *si, nisi, num* and *ne / Ali-* takes a holiday." Say it! "After *si, nisi, num* and *ne / Ali-* takes a ..."? Again. Keep going. *S.P.D.*"