Second Conditional

Use:        
The second conditional structure is used to talk about imaginary situations and the consequences.  
**Example: If I had a car, I could visit my friend.**  
                (But the truth is, I do not have a car, and I cannot visit my friend).

The second conditional structure is also used to talk about imaginary abilities and the consequences.  
                **Example: If I could fly, I wouldn’t need a car.**  
                (But the truth is, I cannot fly, and so I need a car.)

Form:  
1)  Make the second conditional in this way.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| If | I you he she... | past simple | , | I you he she... | would / wouldn’t ‘d  could / couldn’t | verb (infinitive form) |

Example:             **If we had more money, we would buy that house.**

Or

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| I you he she... | would / wouldn’t ‘d  could / couldn’t | verb (infinitive form) | if | I you he she... | past simple |

Example:             **She’d be more successful if she worked harder.**

2)  The verb **to be** can use **were** for all subjects. This is particularly true in the sentence: ***If I were you…***  
*If I were you, I’d buy a bicycle.*

However, this rule is often overlooked.  
*If he were more careful, he wouldn’t break everything.*=>  
*If he was more careful, he wouldn’t break everything.*

3)  To talk about imaginary abilities, use **could**.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| If | I you he she... | could + verb (infinitive) | , | I you he she... | would / wouldn’t ‘d | verb (infinitive form) |

Example:             **If I could help you, I would!**

4)  Notice that the infinitive verb after the modal verbs is not necessary if the meaning is clear. Don’t contract modal verbs when there is no infinitive verb present.

If I could pay, ~~I’d~~...   =>   **If I could pay, I would...**

Common errors:  
1) Many students write **would**after**If**  
~~If I would have a lot of money, I would buy that car!~~  
=>           If I had a lot of money, I would buy that car!

2) Many students forget to use **could** to talk about abilities.  
                If I played the drums, I’d join a band.  
=>           If I could play the drums, I’d join a band.