

C14. An Inquiring Mind

zero conditional



One day, William was out fishing with his son Jack. After a while, Jack gazed up at the clouds and asked,

'Dad, can I ask you something? **If you look at the air, it doesn't have** any colour. So why is the sky blue?'

William thought for a moment and then replied, 'I don't know, son.'

A few minutes later, Jack said to his father,

'**If I drop** a stone into the water it sinks, but this boat **doesn't sink**. Why can some things float but other things can't, dad?'

'I can't remember, son. I think I learnt it at school, but I've forgotten.' replied William.

They carried on fishing for a while, until Jack asked,

'Dad, I've been thinking. **If humans try** to breathe underwater, we **drown**, but **if you take** a fish out of water, it **dies**. Why's that?'

'I haven't got a clue, I'm afraid.' replied his father.

Again there was a pause. Jack was worried he was starting to annoy his dad, so he said,

'Dad, I hope you don't mind me asking you all this stuff.'

'Of course I don't mind, son. It's good that you're asking these questions.' replied William, smiling, '**If children don't ask** questions, they never **learn** anything.'

Grammar: Zero conditional form

To talk about scientific facts and situations which always happen in the same way every time, you can use this form: **If + present simple + present simple**. This is sometimes called the zero conditional form.

*If you **take** a fish out of water it **dies**.*

*If you **put** an ice cube in the sun it **melts**.*

*If you **press** this button a light **comes on**.*

Match the broken sentences.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. If you multiply five and ten... | A. it sinks. |
| 2. If the sun is in the east... | B. you get orange. |
| 3. If you fold your clothes carefully... | C. it is sunrise. |
| 4. If you add yellow paint to red paint... | D. they take up less room in your suitcase. |
| 5. If you drop a stone into water... | E. you get fifty. |

There are lots of jokes in English which begin with 'What do you get if you...?' Match the questions with the answers of these four jokes.

6. What do you get if you cross a worm with an elephant?
 7. What do you get if you cross a crocodile with a flower?
 8. What do you get if you cross an octopus with a cow?
 9. What do you get if you cross an elephant with a kangaroo?
- A. I don't know but I'm not going to smell it.
 B. Great big holes all over Australia.
 C. An animal that can milk itself.
 D. Great big holes in your garden.

Vocabulary exercises

Match the verbs with the definitions.

to drown to gaze to sink to float to annoy to breathe to pause

1. to make someone angry: _____
2. to go down below the surface of the water: _____
3. to take air into your body: _____

4. to die because you are underwater: _____
5. to stop for a short time: _____
6. to rest on the surface of the water: _____
7. to look for a long time: _____

Choose the right preposition to complete these sentences.

8. When my alarm clock went off this morning I just carried **for** / **with** / **on** sleeping.
9. I learnt to speak French **at** / **to** / **on** school, but I've forgotten most of what I learnt.
10. I'm going to be out of the office **at** / **for** / **on** a while, so can you take any messages for me?
11. You should think **in** / **at** / **for** a moment before you reply to this.
12. My cousins are **out** / **about** / **along** fishing and they won't be back until later.

ANSWERS