

“WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF...?” MAKING PLANS TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

In this activity, students will practice or review how to use conditionals to discuss plans to get out of tricky situations. This conditional form used for this language function is called the unreal future conditional or the second conditional.

LEVEL

Intermediate and above

LANGUAGE FOCUS

Speaking, listening, grammar (primary focus); writing (secondary focus)

GOALS

Students will orally use unreal future conditionals to ask and answer questions about their plans for solving a variety of problems. Students will take written notes during their interviews so that they can accurately report interview results to the class.

MATERIALS

- Teacher: whiteboard, chalkboard, or large pieces of paper posted on the wall; markers or chalk; a clock or timing device
- Students: pencils or pens, blank writing paper

PREPARATION

- Develop a list of 8-10 “What would you do if...?” question prompts for students to use during the interviews. The questions should present dangerous or challenging situations. Adapt the content to be relevant to your students’ local environment. Examples might include:
 - What would you do if you saw a bear while walking in the woods?
 - What would you do if you were trapped in a room where the walls were closing in on you?
 - What would you do if there were a fire in your kitchen? **
 - What would you do if there were a snake in your bedroom? **
 - What would you do if your computer broke and you lost all of your files?
 - What would you do if a shark appeared next to you while you were swimming?

** During the lesson you may wish to review or highlight that, according to prescriptive grammar rules, with this conditional form the verb “to be” becomes “were” for all persons in the condition clause (*If I were you, If John were 10 years older, etc.*). You can also explain that many American native English speakers no longer observe this rule, so students may also hear *If I was you, If John was 10 years older, etc.*

PROCEDURES

1. Tell students that this activity will require them to be creative and “think on their feet” to solve problems or manage difficult situations.
2. Ask a few volunteers to share responses to one of the “What would you do if...?” questions you developed before class. For example, if you ask “What would you do if you saw a bear while walking in the woods?” students might respond with partial answers, such as “Run away.” or “Make loud noises and try to scare it.” Write student answers on the board in the form of complete future unreal conditional sentences:
 - *If I saw a bear in the woods, I would (I’d) run away.*
 - *If I saw a bear in the woods, I would (I’d) make loud noises and try to scare it.*
3. As desired, draw students’ attention to the grammatical form used in the complete responses: *If + past tense..., would + verb....*
4. Write your complete list of “What would you do if...?” question prompts on the board. Ask the class to brainstorm 3-4 additional tricky situations to add to the question list.
5. Ask students to make three vertical columns on a blank piece of paper. Tell students to write *Question, Name, and Plan* at the top of the three columns. Draw an example on the board, if needed. Ask students to pick their favorite five “What would you do if...?” questions and write in the first column.
6. Ask students to get out of their seats and interview five different people about their plans to deal with the difficult situations. As they interview each person, students should write down his/her name in the second column and make notes about the person’s plan in the third column.
7. When the interview period is complete, ask students to circle the three most creative or funny answers on their interview sheet.
8. Next, in a whole class setting, go through the list of “What would you do if...?” questions on the board, asking 2-3 students to report any unique answers back to the class. Be sure to prompt students to give complete answers when sharing responses. For example: *If Saeed saw a snake in his bedroom, he’d try to hypnotize it by playing music.* Address any errors, as needed, while students share their interview results.
9. If desired, at the end of the sharing session, the class can vote on their favorite plan.