

## Conditional Sentences in Greek

Greek has various types of conditional sentences ('conditionals'). Different combinations of moods lead to different presentations of a conditional relationship in time and likelihood.

The first important distinction is that between once-off conditionals ('if X happens, then Y'), and conditionals that suggest general, repeatable/repeated circumstances ('if anytime X, then always Y'). The latter are called General Conditionals.

Within the group of once-off conditionals, Greek distinguishes many shades of plausibility of the condition.

- Simple/**Neutral** Conditional: the narrator/**speaker does not commit** to likelihood or unlikelihood of fulfillment of the condition (rare!). 'If X is indeed true, then Y.'
- **Contrary-to-Fact** or Unreal Conditional: the narrator/speaker knows that the condition is/was **not true**. 'If pigs had wings, they could fly.'
- (so-called) **Future More Vivid**: the narrator/speaker considers fulfilment of the condition quite **plausible** (frequent). 'If I find out, I'll let you know.'
- (so-called) **Future Less Vivid**: the narrator/speaker considers fulfilment of the condition **possible** but not more than that. 'Should X happen, then Y would.'

Within the group of general conditionals, Greek distinguishes two types:

- **Present General**: General conditional with reference to the present. 'If it rains, the streets get wet.'
- **Past General**: General conditional with reference to the past. English main clause translation will often use 'would' to stress the habitual, repetitive nature. 'If the oracle responded, they would always follow/they always followed its advice.'

[jargon alert]

- The subordinate conditional clause (the if-clause) is called *protasis*.
- The main clause of a conditional sentence (the then-clause) is called *apodosis*.

### Overview of tenses and moods in conditionals

Type of conditional	Protasis (if-clause)	Apodosis (then-clause)
Neutral	εἰ + any indicative	any indicative
Contrary-to-fact	εἰ + indicative II	indicative II + ἄν
Future More Vivid ⇒ plausible	ἐάνν + subj. (= ἄν/ἦν + subj.)	future indicative (/imperative/ other fut. reference)
Future Less Vivid ⇒ just possible	εἰ + opt.	optative + ἄν
Present general	ἐάνν + subj. (= ἄν/ἦν + subj.)	present indicative
Past general	εἰ + opt.	imperfect indicative (sometimes with ἄν)

NOTE:

- Only the *combination* of moods in protasis **and** apodosis can identify the type of conditional !!
- The conditional protasis is always negated with μή --only neutral conditions sometimes have οὐ.
- These same constructions can also be used for temporal clauses (esp. the present and past general: whenever X happens, Y happens), and relative clauses. See 'uses of subj and opt' sheet.
- Circumstantial participles sometimes function as 'protasis' of a conditional: E.g. Having done your best, you will not fail ⇒ If you do your best, ..