

*Conditionals, Hypotheticals, and Counterfactuals:  
A brief review of three types of verb "tenses" in English*

First, compare these three sentences:

- a. If you go to MIT, you will have to do lots of problems sets.
- b. If you were to go to MIT, you would have to do lots of problem sets.
- c. If you had gone to MIT, you would have had to do lots of problem sets.

These illustrate three different types of verb (more accurately, "mood"): conditional, hypothetical, and counterfactual.

More examples:

I. Conditionals

If Jane majors in chemistry, she will get job offers from pharmaceutical companies.  
If you bet on that horse, you will lose money.  
If they make us an offer, we will accept it.

If he survived the avalanche, the searchers will find him.  
If Bill sent that email, he will be fired.

II. Hypotheticals

If Jane were to major in chemistry, she would get job offers from pharmaceutical companies.

If you were to bet on that horse, you would lose money.

If they were to make us an offer, we would accept it.

If he were to survive an avalanche, searchers would find him./ For him to have survived the avalanche would have been (would be) a miracle.

If I were Superman, I would...

If you were to travel at the speed of light, you would...

If you were to encounter a ghost, would you know what to do?

Verbs

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### III. Counterfactuals

If Jane had majored in chemistry, she would have received job offers from pharmaceuticals. (or) Had Jane majored in chemistry, she would have received job offers from pharmaceuticals.

If you had bet on that horse, you would have lost money.

If they had made us an offer, we would have accepted it.

If he had survived the avalanche, the searchers would have found him./For him to have survived the avalanche would have been a miracle.