Remember to watch the video first! Then read the conversation between Sophie and Anna, an English language student that Sophie met in Iceland. Sophie's helping Anna understand how to use conditionals.

We use conditional sentences to say one thing depends on another. They can be used to talk about real or imaginary situations. One of the clauses starts with *if* (or a similar word) – this is the conditional clause. The other clause talks about the result of the conditional clause happening.

Anna: Ummm?

Sophie: Don't worry, it's a lot easier than it sounds. Let's look at some examples.

> *If you don't tell me, I'll just keep asking.*
> *If I promise to travel less, will you forgive me?*

Anna: I know that one. It's a first conditional: *if* + present simple, then *will* + infinitive.

Sophie: That's right. It's for talking about a situation in the future which the speaker thinks is quite possible. If the first condition happens, something will happen as a result. In this conditional sentence, the present tense after *if* refers to the future, not the present.

Anna: And can you change the order of the clauses round?

Sophie: Yes, and we leave out the comma in the middle of the sentence if the order is changed round.

> *I'll just keep asking if you don't tell me.*

Anna: OK. I also know the second conditional. *If* + past simple, then *would* + infinitive.

Sophie: Right again! This is for talking about an unlikely or unreal condition.

> *If you travelled less because of me, I'd feel worse.*
> *If I had the opportunity to visit places like that, I wouldn't complain!*

So, in the second example, Oliver doesn't think he will have the opportunity to travel a lot. It's possible but improbable. We use the past simple to show that it's not likely, not to indicate past time.

Can you use any other verbs, apart from *would*, in this kind of conditional?

Yes, we sometimes use other modal verbs like *might* or *could* in the result clause (not the *if* clause).

I see. What about, 'If you mix blue and yellow, you get green'. Is that a conditional?

Yes. That's a zero conditional. We often use them for facts, or in academic subjects.

When it rains a lot, **the animals move** to higher ground. (geography)

What about other words that can replace *if*, like *unless* and *as long as*?

Well, *unless* is a kind of negative version of *if*.

*I'll never go **unless** you take me. (= If you don't take me, I'll never go.)*

As long as imposes a condition on someone. You're telling them what you expect them to do.

*You can borrow my surfboard **as long as** you get it back to me by five o'clock.*

So if you agree to what I say, you can borrow my surfboard?

Exactly.

Are there any other conditionals?

Well, there's the third conditional, but we'll deal with that separately.

Phew! Now, *if you don't mind, I'll have* to stop there.

That's fine, *as long as* everything's clear!

Watch the video on our website!