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English In A Minute

The 3rd conditional



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This is not a word-for-word transcript

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Welcome to BBC Learning English. I'm Sam and today we're talking about **the third conditional**.

The third conditional is a little strange because we're talking about something that didn't happen in the past. Why would we do that? Well, because sometimes we want to imagine a different outcome.

A friend of mine came to visit me yesterday. It was a surprise, so when I opened my front door, I said:

"If I'd known you were coming, I would have baked a cake!"

Did I know she was coming? No. Did I bake a cake? No.

So I'm imagining a different result.

Because we're talking about an imaginary past, we use:

If + the subject + the past perfect, the subject + would have + past participle

And you can also swap those round: **What would you have done if you'd known your friend was coming?**