Will
Hello, and welcome to today’s Grammar Gameshow! I’m your host, Will! And if we cannot do what we will, we must will what we can. And of course, let’s not forget Leslie, our all-knowing voice in the sky.

Leslie
Hello, everyone!

Will
Tonight we’re going to ask you three questions about…

Leslie
The second conditional! That present-to-future construction with ‘if’ that’s all about the unreal!

Will
OK! Now, let’s meet our contestants!

Liz
Hello, all. My name’s Liz.

Will
And contestant number two?

Rory
Hello, everyone. My name’s Rory.

Will
Nice to see you again Liz! How are you?

Liz
I’m well, thank you. Fighting fit and ready for action.

Will
Wonderful! I hope you do really well.
Liz
That sounded… nice! No cruel jokes? No false pleasantries?

Will
No, no. It’s all about self-control! I’m trying out a new nicer me. Welcome Rory! Tell me something about yourself.

Rory
I collect pencils.

Will
What a fascinating hobby! Well, I hope you do really well, both of you. OK. Let’s get going and don’t forget you can play along at home too. It’s a double-question round so fingers on those buzzers! First question! What is the formula for a basic second conditional structure?

Rory
Is it ‘if’ plus a present tense and ‘will’ plus an infinitive?

Will
So sorry, Rory. That is the first conditional. But please, dear friend, have another go for free.

Rory
OK. Is it ‘if’ plus a present tense and ‘will’ plus an infinitive?

Will
No! That was the same answer again. You know, the old me would have killed you for that. Literally, plucked your eyes out of your skull. But Liz, why don’t you give it a try?

Liz
Isn’t it ‘If’ plus a past tense plus ‘would’ plus an infinitive verb?

Will
Can you give me an example?

Liz
I am eating a toffee.

Will
No, that’s the present continuous.

Liz
I know, just pushing your buttons.
Will
Oh! Great! So funny!

Liz
Wow, you are doing well. The real answer is: if I had more time, I’d have a holiday.

Will
Leslie?

Leslie
Correct!

Will
Well done! And onto our second question. What is the second conditional used for?

Rory
We use a second conditional after a first conditional. First and then second, see?

Will
Yes, I can see what you’ve done there. It’s logical, but not right, I’m afraid. Liz?

Liz
It’s used for a hypothetical present or future situation and its consequence.

Will
Leslie?

Leslie
Correct! The second conditional structure is used for an unreal or extremely unlikely, present or future situation and its consequence. Its formula is ‘If’ plus the past simple or continuous, and ‘would’ plus an infinitive verb! For example: if I were a girl, I’d be called …Leslita!

Will
Oh, what a lovely name! Well done Liz, six points to you. And Rory, you are very good at pushing that buzzer, aren’t you? Yes. One point to you. On to our second round. Look at these two sentences. One is in the first conditional and one is in the second conditional. I want to know what the difference in meaning is:
a) If I leave now, I will get home early.
b) If I left now, I would get home early.

Rory
My name’s Rory!
Will
Well, that’s wonderful to know, good friend. Liz?

Liz
Isn’t it something to do with the speaker’s perception of a situation? With the first conditional, the speaker believes that something is possible and might actually happen. With the second conditional the speaker says something is unlikely or unreal.

Will
Wow. What an informative answer. Let’s see if it’s correct. Leslie, old friend?

Leslie
It is correct! Many ideas can be expressed in either the first or second conditional. They both talk about a present or future time, after all. The difference is that when using a first conditional the speaker believes that an event is possible or real. But if they use the second conditional, they are saying it’s unlikely or impossible!

Will
Six points to you Liz!

Liz
I’m really impressed. This is like a whole new you! I like this Will!

Will
Thanks! You know, me too! I’m sleeping better, I’ve got more energy and I don’t spend hours checking myself out in front of the mirror. Let’s move on to our final round. Which of these sentences is incorrect?

a) If I were rich, I’d buy a yacht.
b) If you were rich, you’d buy a yacht.
c) If he were rich, he’d buy a yacht.
d) If they were rich, they’d buy a yacht.

Will
Rory, is this a proper answer?

Rory
Yes.

Will
Are you sure?

Rory
Yes!
Will
Well then go on, old friend! Give it a go!

Rory
I choose present perfect.

Will
Liz?

Liz
I think c) is wrong. It should be if he was…

Will
Leslie?

Leslie
Sorry Liz… none of them are incorrect. In the second conditional, people commonly put the verb ‘be’ into the form ‘were’ for any pronoun… including ‘I’, ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘it’. It is frequent to hear both styles, though many consider the ‘were’ form to be more formal.

Liz
I am so silly. I knew that and forgot it.

Will
And you were doing really well. Have twenty points anyway. And to you too, Rory! Well that brings us to the end of today’s Grammar Gameshow. Let’s count out the points… and the winner is… both of you! You’re both winners in my book!

Liz
Hang on! He didn’t even answer one question right! Why does he win too?

Will
Well, I can’t drop him down the pit. It wouldn’t be good for the new calm me! I’m much nicer now.

Liz
But don’t you miss it? The thrill of the drop…

Will
The drop?

Liz
Drop. When was the last time you…
**Will**
The drop. Well, it has been a while…

**Liz**
You must be really strong to just drop the drop

**Rory**
Drop the drop! Drop the drop! Drop the drop! Drop the drop! Drop, drop, drop, drop!

**Will**
Aw heck! And bring him back up! And drop him back down! Release the clowns! It looks like we’ll need another contestant. Ah… so much better. I’m back!

**Liz**
And my prize? I’m fine…

**Will**
We’ll see you again next week, where you can play for another prize. Thanks for joining us. Say goodbye Leslie.

**Leslie**
Alavida, Leslie.

**Will**
See you next time.