SECOND CONDITIONAL · SONG WORKSHEET

If you swapped lives for one day...

Cooking, cleaning, looking after children and older relatives: none of it is paid, and most of it is done by women.



UN Women: for every hour of unpaid care work men do, women do 2.5.

What would change if men and women swapped lives, even for one day? One of the best-known songs of 2008 asks exactly that.

Meet the song

If I Were a Boy · Beyoncé, 2008

From the album *I Am... Sasha Fierce*. Beyoncé imagines one day as a man, and how differently she would act in a relationship.

An imagined situation in the present is the job of the second conditional.

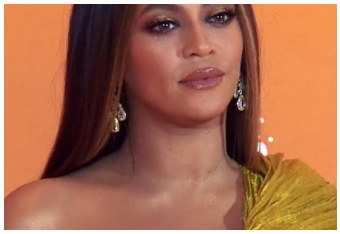


Photo: Beyoncé by Sassy, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, cropped.

Listen and read

Play the song in **Spotify**, **Apple Music** or **YouTube Music** with the lyrics switched on.

Where to look	What to find
Verse 1	*If I were a boy* and a list of things she *would* do, most with *I'd*.
Verse 2	One thing she *could* understand and the kind of man she *would* be.
The chorus	No *if* at all. The present simple: the real situation.

Imagination and reality in one song

The verses: imagined	The chorus: real
If I were a manager, I'd listen more.	*I'm not a manager.*
If I had more time, I'd learn to cook.	*I don't have time.*
if + past simple, would + verb	**present simple**

ESL LAB

Good to know

1. **Past form, present meaning.** After *if*, the past form does not mean the past. It means *not real*.
2. **were for everyone.** *If I were, if she were.* You'll hear *If I was* in conversation, but *If I were you* is the fixed phrase for advice.
3. **could = would be able to.** *If I spoke Italian, I could work in Rome.*
4. **'d = would** here. *I'd go = I would go.*
5. **First or second?** It depends on how real it feels. *If I get the job, I'll move* (I've applied). *If I got the job, I'd move* (very unlikely).

Song titles and artist names are used for identification only. esl.laboratory is not affiliated with or endorsed by the artists or their labels.

Practice

Exercise 1
Read the lyrics as you listen. Circle the right answer.

1. In verse 1, most of the things she imagines start with **I'll** / **I'd**.
2. *I'd* in verse 1 means I **had** / **would**.
3. In verse 2, *could* means **was able to in the past** / **would be able to**.
4. The chorus is about **reality** / **imagination**.

Exercise 2
Reality to imagination. Write a second conditional sentence.

1. I don't speak Italian, so I can't watch films without subtitles.
   _____
2. She lives far away, so we rarely see her.
   _____
3. I'm not a morning person, so I'm often late.
   _____
4. He doesn't cook, so he eats a lot of takeaways.
   _____

Exercise 3
Swap places for a day. Complete with *would* + the verb.

1. If I were my boss, I _____ (give) everyone Friday off.
2. If my dad were me, he _____ (spend) all day on his phone.
3. If I were the teacher, I _____ (not give) homework.
4. If my sister were me, she _____ (be) much tidier.
5. If I were a cat, I _____ (sleep) eighteen hours a day.

Exercise 4
Write the questions. Then answer two of them.

1. you / swap lives with anyone for a day / who?
   _____
2. you / could live in any city / where / live?
   _____
3. you / find €1,000 in the street / what / do?
   _____

Exercise 5
***was* or *were*? Circle the best choice for formal writing.**

1. If I **was** / **were** you, I'd ask for a pay rise.
2. If she **was** / **were** here, she'd know what to do.
3. I wish it **was** / **were** Friday.
4. If it **was** / **were** cheaper, more people would buy it.

Exercise 6
First or second? Circle the sentence that fits the situation.

1. *You've applied for the job.* **If I get it, I'll move.** / **If I got it, I'd move.**
2. *You never buy lottery tickets.* **If I win, I'll travel.** / **If I won, I'd travel.**
3. *It's very cloudy.* **If it rains, we'll stay in.** / **If it rained, we'd stay in.**
4. *You live in the desert.* **If it snows, I'll build a snowman.** / **If it snowed, I'd build a snowman.**

Exercise 7
If I were ... for a day. Choose a person from the box and write 50 to 70 words.

CHOOSE ONE	
a man or a woman, like the song	my teacher
my boss	a famous athlete
my mum or dad	the leader of my country
my best friend	my cat or dog

Start like this: If I were ... for a day, I'd ... Use at least three sentences with I'd or I wouldn't.