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.

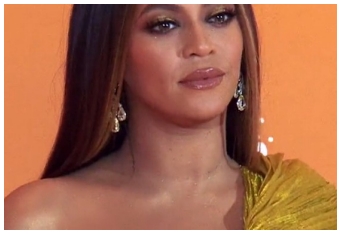


Photo: Beyoncé by Sassy, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, cropped.

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.

Teacher's notes: say, ask, expect

Say	Ask	Expect
Look at the chart. Who does more unpaid work?	*Is it the same in your country?*	Opinions; keep it short, it's a warm-up.
Beyoncé imagines one day as a boy.	*Is she a boy? Is it real?*	No. So it's imagined: *If I were...*
Listen to verse 1. What would she do?	*Which word comes before the verbs?*	*I'd = I would.*
Now the chorus.	*Is the chorus imagined or real?*	Real. No *if*, present simple.

Watch for

1. *If I would be...*: no *would* in the if part.
2. Students reading *If I had* as the past. Point back to the grid: past form, present meaning.

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.
   If I spoke Italian, I could watch films without subtitles.
2. She lives far away, so we rarely see her.
   If she didn't live so far away, we'd see her more often.
3. I'm not a morning person, so I'm often late.
   If I were a morning person, I wouldn't be late so often.
4. He doesn't cook, so he eats a lot of takeaways.
   If he cooked, he wouldn't eat so many takeaways.

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

1. If I were my boss, I **'d give** (give) everyone Friday off.
2. If my dad were me, he **'d spend** (spend) all day on his phone.
3. If I were the teacher, I **wouldn't give** (not give) homework.
4. If my sister were me, she **'d be** (be) much tidier.
5. If I were a cat, I **'d sleep** (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?
   Who would you swap lives with for a day?
2. you / could live in any city / where / live?
   Where would you live if you could live in any city?
3. you / find €1,000 in the street / what / do?
   What would you do if you found €1,000 in the street?

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.

Example: *If I were my mum for a day, I'd get up at six and make breakfast for everyone. I wouldn't check my phone at all. I'd call my grandparents and I'd finally understand why she worries so much. In the evening I'd tell my son to go to bed early, and he wouldn't listen.*