Teaching the Conditionals: Form & Meaning Chart

A compact reference chart covering the zero, first, second and third conditionals: their structure, typical meaning, and a sample sentence for each.

Zero conditional

- Form: If + present simple, present simple.
- Meaning: general truths, facts, cause and effect.
- Example: If you heat water to 100C, it boils.

First conditional

- Form: If + present simple, will + base verb.
- Meaning: real or likely future possibility.
- Example: If it rains, we will stay inside.

Second conditional

- Form: If + past simple, would + base verb.
- Meaning: unreal, hypothetical or unlikely present/future.
- Example: If I won the lottery, I would travel the world.

Third conditional

- Form: If + past perfect, would have + past participle.
- Meaning: unreal past; regret or imagined different outcome.
- Example: If I had studied, I would have passed.

Teaching tips

- Teach form and meaning together, not as isolated grammar drills.
- Use timelines to show real vs unreal time.
- Practise with personalised, meaningful prompts.