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| THE CONDITIONAL ‘*IF*’  Few connectors have as powerful an effect in elevating your speech to the advanced level as the use of the conditional. Proper use is a true hallmark of an advanced speaker. It is also one of the trickier constructions to use. This can be conquered, however, if you remember two rules:   * Arabic has two different kinds of conditions – those that are possible and those that are not.[[1]](#footnote-1) Think of the difference between:   *If I go to Egypt, I will visit the pyramids*  *If I were you, I would stay away from that class.*  The particle إذا is used for the possible; لَوْ is for the hypothetical   * The “if” statement is *always* in the past tense, no matter when the event may occur. The logic here is that the action must be completed before the *then* part can take place.   إذا ذهبتُ إلى مصر فسأزور الأهرامات.  لو كنتُ أنتَ فسأتجنب هذا الصف.  as you might expect, the *then* clause is introduced by ف. After the ف, any tense can be used.  this eliminates any confusion about the time frame. As you might also expect, these rules are  very loose in Colloquial.  Ex: Explain the difference between these two statements:  إذا درستُ قبل الامتحان فسأنجح.  لو درستُ قبل الامتحان فنجحتُ. |  |
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The Conditional

Conditional (‘if”) statements are somewhat complicated in Arabic, but they add a great deal to your speech if done correctly and will boost you to a higher level. There are a few things to know:

1. There are three particles used to mean “if”

إذا”if” -

إنْ”if” (rarely used) -

لَوْ”if” (hypothetical) -

The first two are used for things that are possible. إن is not commonly used. You probably know it best from the phrase إن شاء الله “if God wills”.

لوْ is a special word that is only used for things that are not possible, such as things that didn’t happen in the past, or statements like “If I were you.”

1. The second big rule is that all “if” particles are always followed by past tense. Even a statement like “If the Sun supernovas in 10 billion years…” must be in the past. The logic is a bit tough to understand, but basically, they’re saying the event in the first part must be complete for the result in the second part to occur. It’s best just to memorize the rule.

إذا

إنْ *ALL followed by past tense -*

لَوْ-

1. The final rule is that if the “then” clause is introduced by ف , it can have anything you want in it. If not, the result must be past tense. For simplicity, though, it is much easier to introduce any “then” clause with ف
2. إذا درستَ جيداً فستنجح.
3. لو عرفتُ ذلك فلم أشترِ السيارة.
4. إذا سافرتُ إلى مصر فسأفتقد أصدقائي هنا.
5. لو كنتُ أنتَ فلن أذهب إلى الحفلة معه.

1. the difference here is one of intent. “If I become president” could be either possible or hypothetical, depending on your situation and the intent of the statement. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)