Remember to watch the video first! Then read the conversation between Sophie and Mei, a student that Sophie met on her travels. Sophie's helping Mei understand how to use future forms.

Grammar Snacks

We use the third conditional (*if* + past perfect, *would* + *have* + past participle) to talk about something in the past that did not happen.

Mei

How is the third conditional different from the other conditionals?

This is the way we imagine how things could have been different in the past. If something had been different, something else would have happened. Notice that both the condition and the result are impossible now.

*If I'**d known**, I **would have worn** something nicer.*

In this case, Amy didn't know about the party so she didn't wear special clothes.

OK, so the bit after *if* is different to what really happened?

Yes, then the next clause is imagining the result in the past, which didn't happen, of course. The *if* clause can be at the beginning or at the end of the sentence.

*I definitely **would've remembered** if you'**d told** me!*

Sophie

So Alfie didn't remember because Ollie didn't tell him.

Exactly. We can use negatives to talk about things that did happen in the past.

*He **wouldn't have missed** the bus if he **hadn't overslept**.*

So he overslept and he missed the bus.

Yes. When you're using this kind of conditional be careful with the contractions. We use *'d* for *would* and *had*.

*If I'**d seen** him, I'**d have asked** him to come over. (had, would)*

Can you use other verbs apart from *would*?

Yes, we also use *could* or *might*.

If they'd told me, I might have been able to help.

These sentences all seem a bit negative.

Well, yes. We often use the third conditional to express regret or to complain about something.

It would've been even better if Alfie hadn't ruined it!

If I'd known about the third conditional before, I wouldn't have failed my English test!

Watch the video on our website!