CAPITOLO

4

What If...?

Every big change in the world started with two small words: "What if...?"

OBIETTIVI

1. I can talk about the environment, use collocations with *reduce, reuse, save, waste, protect* and form opposites with *un-, dis-, ir-*.
2. I can use the zero conditional for facts and the first conditional with *unless* for real possibilities.
3. I can use the second conditional to imagine situations and give advice, and *wish* + past simple for present wishes.
4. I can take part in a discussion: give opinions, agree and disagree politely, interrupt and make suggestions.
5. I can plan and write an opinion essay with a clear structure and linkers.
6. I can talk about the Great Barrier Reef and air pollution, and compare them with environmental issues in Italy.

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Imagine a world without plastic bottles, traffic jams or smog. Would it be possible? This unit is about the choices we make for the planet, and about the language we use to imagine other possibilities. At Hillside, the school magazine asks a big question — *Should our school go plastic-free?* — and Sam and Callum give two very different answers. On the Bristol–Turin Link, Giulia writes an essay on cars in city centres, and Aoife plays a game that starts with *What would you do if...?*

To talk about facts, real possibilities and imaginary situations, English uses **conditionals**: *If you heat ice, it **melts**. If it rains, we **'ll** stay in. If I **had** a boat, I **'d** sail to the reef.* You also learn **unless** and **wish**, and how to take part in a discussion.

4.1 Vocabulary: The Environment

4.1.1 Our planet

Tabella 4.1 collects the key words for talking about the environment. Many of them look like Italian words, but be careful with the pronunciation: *emissions* /iˈmɪʃnz/, *renewable* /rɪˈnjuːəbl/, *habitat* /ˈhæbɪtæt/, *species* /ˈspiːʃiːz/. *Species* is the same in the singular and the plural: *one species, two species*.

Tabella 4.1 Environment words

Word	Meaning	Example
climate change	long-term changes in the Earth's temperatures and weather	*Climate change is making summers hotter.*
pollution	dirty or harmful substances in the air, water or soil	*Air pollution is a problem in big cities.*
emissions	gases sent into the air, for example by cars and factories	*We need to cut CO_2 emissions.*
renewable energy	energy from the sun, wind or water, which never runs out	*Wind is a source of renewable energy.*
solar panel	a flat piece of equipment that turns sunlight into electricity	*There are solar panels on the school roof.*
waste	things that people throw away; also the verb *to waste*	*Food waste is a big problem.*
plastic	a light material made from oil (Unit 3); *single-use plastic* is used only once	*Single-use plastic often ends up in the sea.*
endangered species	a kind of animal or plant that may soon disappear	*The snow leopard is an endangered species.*
habitat	the natural home of an animal or plant	*Forests are the habitat of many birds.*
coral reef	a structure in warm, shallow sea, built by tiny animals called corals	*Coral reefs are full of fish.*

Notice that *pollution* and *waste* are usually uncountable (✗ *a pollution*, ✗ *wastes*), while *emissions* is almost always plural. *Climate change* takes no article: ✓ *Climate change is a global problem*, ✗ *The climate change is...*

4.1.2 Collocations: *reduce, reuse, save, waste, protect*

Words that often go together are called **collocations**. Learn the verb with its noun, not alone: we *save energy*, but we don't ✗ *save pollution*. Tabella 4.2 shows the most useful ones. The famous slogan *Reduce, reuse, recycle* puts the three actions in order of importance: first use less, then use things again, and only then recycle them.

Tabella 4.2 Collocations with *reduce, reuse, save, waste, protect*

Verb	Nouns it goes with	Example
reduce	waste, pollution, emissions, the amount of plastic	*Our school wants to reduce waste.*
reuse	bags, bottles, paper, jars	*I reuse the same water bottle every day.*
save	energy, water, money, the planet	*Short showers save water.*
waste	energy, water, food, money, time	*Don't waste food: take only what you can eat.*
protect	the environment, wildlife, a habitat, the reef	*Marine parks protect coral reefs.*

4.1.3 Word formation: negative prefixes *un-*, *dis-*, *ir-*

In *English 1* (Unit 2) you met the negative prefixes *un-, im-, in-, dis-* with personality adjectives (*unfriendly, impatient, dishonest*). They are very common in environment texts too. A **prefix** goes at the start of a word and changes its meaning. Before *r*, the prefix *in-* becomes *ir-* (*responsible* → *irresponsible*), before *l* it becomes *il-* (*legal* → *illegal*), and before *m* and *p* it becomes *im-* (*possible* → *impossible*). Notice the double letter in *irresponsible*, *illegal* and *unnecessary*: one belongs to the prefix, one to the word.

Tabella 4.3 Negative prefixes in environment words

Prefix	Examples
un-	*sustainable → unsustainable, necessary → unnecessary, healthy → unhealthy, safe → unsafe*
dis-	*agree → disagree, appear → disappear, advantage → disadvantage, connect → disconnect*
ir- (before *r*)	*responsible → irresponsible, replaceable → irreplaceable, reversible → irreversible*
il- / *im-*	*legal → illegal, possible → impossible, polite → impolite*

Something **sustainable** can continue for a long time without damaging the planet: *Cycling to school is a sustainable habit; throwing away a phone every year is unsustainable.*

4.2 Reading: Should Our School Go Plastic-Free?

Before you read. How many things made of single-use plastic have you used today? Think of bottles, wrappers, straws, bags. Make a list with a partner in one minute.

Every month *Hillside Voice*, the school magazine, publishes a debate. This month the Green Team has proposed a plastic-free school by next September. Two Year 11 students give their opinions, and the Link adds a view from Turin. (*testo della redazione*)

The Big Debate: Should Our School Go Plastic-Free?

Hillside Voice · The Big Debate

YES — Callum Reid, Year 11, Green Team

Every day the canteen sells about three hundred drinks in plastic bottles. If you multiply that by the number of school days in a year, you get a mountain of plastic — and that is only drinks. Most of it is used for ten minutes and then thrown away. Some of it is recycled, but a lot isn't. If plastic gets into rivers, it ends up in the sea, where it stays for hundreds of years. That isn't an opinion; it's science.

I know what some people are going to say: *one school can't change the world*. Of course not. But if we go plastic-free, other schools in Bristol will notice, and some of them will follow us. And it isn't hard. If the school installed water fountains in every corridor, nobody would need to buy bottled water. If the canteen used real plates and metal cutlery, we wouldn't need plastic forks. We already have a recycling club, a bike shed and solar panels on the sports hall. A plastic-free school is the next step.

Unless we start now, nothing will change. I wish more students cared about this, because it's our future, not the teachers'. So vote YES at the school council meeting!

NOT YET — Sam Taylor, Year 11

Let me be clear: I'm not against the environment. I recycle, I cycle to school when it isn't pouring with rain, and my little sister's rabbit, Biscuit, eats my vegetable peelings, so we hardly waste any food at home. But I think the Green Team's plan is too fast.

Firstly, it would be expensive. If the school bought water fountains and new plates, it wouldn't have money for other things, like books or the music room. Secondly, some plastic is difficult to replace. What about the science labs? Gloves, test tubes and lab equipment are often made of plastic for safety reasons. And thirdly, a total ban could be unfair. Some students bring a packed lunch, and their parents might not be able to buy expensive reusable boxes.

So my answer is: reduce plastic step by step. Start with bottles, because that is the easiest change. If it works, we'll go further next year. If we try to do everything at once, people will get annoyed and the whole idea will fail. I wish the Green Team were a bit more patient — but I agree with their goal.

A VIEW FROM TURIN — Giulia Ferraro, Link partner

In Italy ordinary plastic shopping bags were banned in 2011, and now shops sell bags that can go in the food-waste bin. At first people complained, but today nobody remembers the old bags. At my school we can't get bottled water from the machines any more, and most of us bring a metal bottle. So my advice to Hillside is: if I were you, I'd try it. Changes always look harder before they happen.

Language in context

Look at how the writers use conditionals to argue. Callum states a fact with a **zero conditional** (*If plastic gets into rivers, it ends up in the sea*), predicts real results with the **first conditional** (*if we go plastic-free, other schools … will notice*) and imagines changes that are not real yet with the **second conditional** (*If the school installed water fountains, nobody would need…*). Notice also *Unless we start now*, *I wish more students cared* and Giulia's advice *if I were you, I'd try it*.

4.3 Grammar: Zero, First and Second Conditionals, *wish*

A **conditional** sentence has two parts: the *if*-clause, which gives a condition, and the main clause, which gives the result. The *if*-clause can come first (followed by a comma) or second (no comma): *If it rains, we'll stay in.* = *We'll stay in if it rains.* Figura 4.1 puts the three conditionals of this unit on a scale, from what is always true to what is only imagined. The complete table is in the appendix (Tabella C.1).

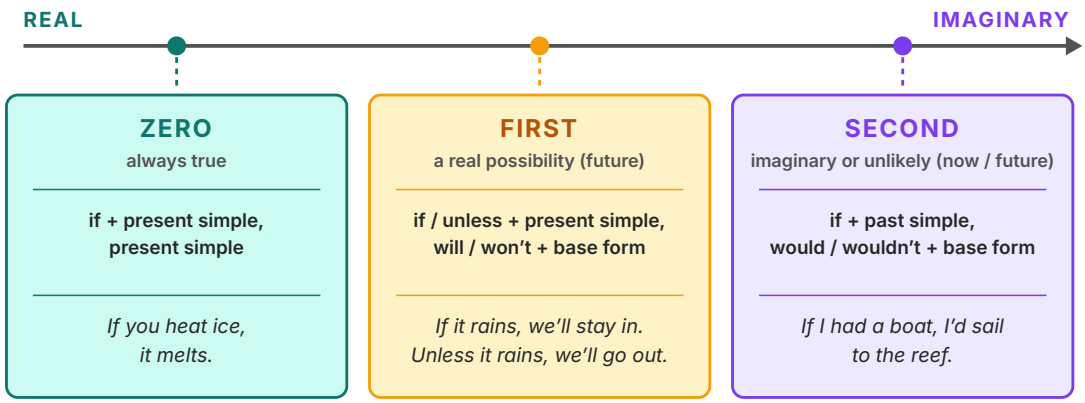


Figura 4.1 The conditionals of this unit, from real to imaginary. The zero conditional describes things that are always true; the first conditional, real possibilities in the future; the second conditional, situations that are imaginary or unlikely, now or in the future.

4.3.1 The zero conditional

We use the **zero conditional** for things that are always true when the condition happens: general truths, scientific facts and habits. Both verbs are in the **present simple**.

Tabella 4.4 The zero conditional: *if* + present simple, present simple

if-clause	Main clause	Use
If you heat water to 100 °C at sea level,	*it boils.*	a scientific fact
If plants don't get light,	*they die.*	a general truth
If I'm tired,	*I go to bed early.*	a personal habit
If you see a bottle bank,	*use it!*	an instruction (imperative)

In the zero conditional, *if* means almost the same as *when* or *whenever* (= every time): *When you heat ice, it melts.* In instructions and advice, the main clause is often an imperative: *If you feel cold, put on a jumper.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Zero conditional (periodo ipotetico di tipo zero). *if* + presente, presente. Si usa per verità generali, fatti scientifici e abitudini: *If you heat ice, it melts* = Se scaldi il ghiaccio, si scioglie. Qui *if* equivale quasi a *when* (quando, ogni volta che).

Confronto con l'italiano. I due verbi sono al presente, come in italiano; ma il soggetto generico è *you*, dove l'italiano usa il *si* impersonale (*Se si scalda il ghiaccio...*).

COLLEGAMENTI

Science: the zero conditional in the lab. Scientific laws are often written as zero conditionals, because they are always true under the same conditions. *If water reaches 100 °C at sea level, it boils. If ice reaches 0 °C, it melts.* Notice the words *at sea level*: on a high mountain, where the air pressure is lower, water boils at a lower temperature.

Biology works in the same way. Reef-building corals live together with tiny algae inside their bodies. The algae give the corals their colour and most of their food. *If the sea gets too warm for too long, the corals push the algae out and turn white.* This is called **coral bleaching**. *If the water cools down in time, the corals can recover; if the heat continues, many of them die.*

4.3.2 The first conditional revisited: *unless*

You studied the first conditional in *English 1* (Unit 12): ***if* + present simple, *will / won't* + base form**, for real possibilities in the future — *If we go plastic-free, other schools will follow us.* Now you can also use **unless**, which means ***if ... not***:

Tabella 4.5 *unless = if ... not*

With *if ... not*	With *unless*
If we don't start now, nothing will change.	*Unless we start now, nothing will change.*
You won't pass if you don't study.	*You won't pass unless you study.*
If it doesn't rain, I'll cycle to school.	*Unless it rains, I'll cycle to school.*

The verb after *unless* is **affirmative**, because *unless* already contains the negative idea. *Unless* is very common in warnings and conditions: *The reef will die unless we protect it. You can't come in unless you have a ticket.* It also works in the zero conditional: *Plants die unless they get light.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

unless (a meno che, se non). *unless* + presente = *if* + negativo: *Unless we start now, nothing will change* = Se non cominciamo adesso / A meno che non cominciamo adesso, non cambierà niente.

Confronto con l'italiano. L'italiano *a meno che* vuole il congiuntivo e spesso un *non* in più (*a meno che non piova*); l'inglese invece usa il presente e nessuna negazione: *unless it rains*. Come con *if*, dopo *unless* non si usa mai *will*.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *Unless you don't hurry, you'll miss the bus.* → ✓ *Unless you hurry, you'll miss the bus.* (*unless* è già negativo: non aggiungere *don't*)

✗ *If it will rain, we'll stay in.* → ✓ *If it* ***rains****, we'll stay in.* (dopo *if* e *unless* si usa il presente, mai *will*)

APPROFONDIMENTO

A poem built on *if*. Rudyard Kipling (1865–1936), the author of *The Jungle Book*, wrote a poem called "If—", published in 1910 in his book *Rewards and Fairies*. It is a father's advice to his son, and it begins:

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;

Keep your head means stay calm; *all about you* means all the people around you. Notice *if* + present (*can keep*). The poem is one long sentence: the *if*-clauses go on for thirty lines, and the main clause arrives only at the end, with *will*: *you'll be a Man, my son!*

4.3.3 The second conditional

We use the **second conditional** to imagine situations that are not real now, or that are unlikely in the future: *If I had a boat, I'd sail to the Great Barrier Reef* (but I haven't got a boat). The form is ***if* + past simple, *would / wouldn't* + base form**. The past simple here doesn't talk about the past: it shows that the situation is imaginary.

Tabella 4.6 The second conditional: *if* + past simple, *would* + base form

Affirmative	Negative	Questions	Short answers
*If I **had** more time, I'**d** (would) **volunteer**.*	*If we **didn't have** cars, we **wouldn't** (would not) **have** so much smog.*	*What **would** you **do** if you **found** a turtle in a net? **Would** you **live** in Australia if you **could**?*	*Yes, I would. / No, I wouldn't.*

- ***were* or *was*?** After *if*, you can use *were* with all persons: *If she **were** here, she'd help us. Was* is very common in everyday speech (*If she **was** here...*); *were* is more formal and is preferred in writing.
- **Advice:** *If I were you, I'd...* is a polite way to give advice: *If I were you, I'd take the bus.* (Here *was* is less usual.)
- ***could* and *might*:** in the main clause, *could* means *would be able to*, and *might* means *would perhaps*: *If we had solar panels, we could save energy. If the canteen stopped selling bottles, some students might complain.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

Second conditional (periodo ipotetico della possibilità / irrealtà nel presente). *if* + past simple, *would* + forma base. Corrisponde all'italiano **se + congiuntivo imperfetto, condizionale presente**: *If I had a boat, I would sail to the reef* = Se avessi una barca, andrei fino alla barriera corallina.

Confronto con l'italiano. Al congiuntivo imperfetto (*se avessi, se fossi*) corrisponde il past simple (*if I had, if I were*); il condizionale (*would*) va solo nella frase principale. ✗ *if I would be* è l'equivalente inglese di ✗ *se io sarei*.

If I were you, I'd... = Se fossi in te, ...: è il modo più comune per dare un consiglio.

ERRORE FREQUENTE

✗ *If I would have more money, I would buy an electric bike.* → ✓ *If I* ***had*** *more money, I would buy an electric bike.* (mai *would* nella frase con *if*)

✗ *If I am you, I'd say sorry.* → ✓ *If I* ***were*** *you, I'd say sorry.*

✗ *What you would do if you won the lottery?* → ✓ *What* ***would you*** *do if you won the lottery?* (nella domanda, *would* va prima del soggetto)

4.3.4 First or second conditional?

The choice depends on how real the situation is for the speaker. With the first conditional, the situation is a real possibility; with the second, it is imaginary or very unlikely. Compare:

Tabella 4.7 First or second conditional?

First: a real possibility	Second: imaginary or unlikely
If it's sunny on Saturday, we'll go to the beach. (It may be sunny.)	*If I lived near the sea, I'd go to the beach every day.* (I don't live near the sea.)
If I pass my B1 exam, I'll celebrate. (Giulia is studying for it.)	*If I spoke ten languages, I'd work for the UN.* (I don't.)
If the council votes yes, we'll start in September.	*If I were the head teacher, I'd ban plastic tomorrow.*

Sometimes both are possible, and the choice shows what the speaker thinks: *If I win the competition, I'll buy a new bike* (I think I have a chance) / *If I won the competition, I'd buy a new bike* (I don't really think I'll win).

4.3.5 *wish* + past simple

We use **wish** + past simple to say that we would like a present situation to be different. As in the second conditional, the past simple talks about **now**, not about the past:

Tabella 4.8 *wish* + past simple: present wishes

Situation now	Wish
I don't live near the sea.	*I wish I* ***lived*** *near the sea.*
We have too much homework.	*I wish we* ***didn't have*** *so much homework.*
I can't swim very well.	*I wish I* ***could*** *swim better.*
It's cold and rainy.	*I wish it* ***were*** *(was) warmer.*
Not many students care.	*I wish more students* ***cared****.*

Notice that *can* becomes *could*, and that *were* is possible with all persons, as in the second conditional (*I wish I were taller*; informally *I wish I was taller*). The two structures often go together: *I wish I had a bike. If I had a bike, I'd cycle to school.*

GRAMMAR IN ITALIANO

wish + past simple (desideri sul presente). Corrisponde a *Vorrei che* / *Magari* + congiuntivo imperfetto: *I wish I lived near the sea* = Vorrei abitare vicino al mare / Magari abitassi vicino al mare. *I wish it were warmer* = Magari facesse più caldo.

Confronto con l'italiano. Il verbo dopo *wish* è al passato anche se il desiderio riguarda il presente, proprio come il congiuntivo imperfetto in italiano. Per un desiderio realizzabile nel futuro non si usa *wish* ma *hope*: *I hope you pass your exam* (spero che tu superi l'esame).

4.4 Listening and Speaking: Having a Discussion

Listening 1. On a Link video call, Giulia, Marta, Sam and Callum plan a joint project for the spring: a *Green Week* in both schools. Listen to your classmates reading the script (books closed): which two ideas do they choose?

Tabella 4.9 Listening script — What if we...?

Giulia	So, we need one idea for both schools. Who wants to start?
Callum	Me! I think we should ban plastic bottles for the whole week. If both schools did it, we could compare the results.
Sam	Hmm, I'm not sure about that. Our canteen would just sell cans instead.
Marta	Sorry to interrupt, but at our school you can't buy bottled water anyway. We'd need something different.
Callum	OK, fair point. What do you suggest, then?
Marta	What if we had a "no car" week? Everyone walks, cycles or takes the bus, and we count how many kilometres we save.
Giulia	That's a great idea! I completely agree.
Sam	I see what you mean, but it isn't fair for students who live far away. Some of my friends live twenty kilometres from school.
Giulia	True. How about making it a challenge, not a rule? People join if they can.
Sam	Yes, that would work. And can I just add something? We could also have a swap shop: people bring clothes or books they don't need and take something else.
Callum	I like that. It reduces waste and it costs nothing.

Marta	Exactly. So, to sum up: a travel challenge and a swap shop. Do we all agree?
Callum	Agreed. And if it works, we'll do the bottle ban next year, won't we, Sam?
Sam	We'll see!

Listening 2. Later that evening, Sam calls Aoife in Galway. She is playing a game with her Transition Year group: everyone answers the same question. Listen (books closed): what would Aoife and Sam do?

Tabella 4.10 Listening script — What would you do if…?

Aoife	OK, Sam, today's question: what would you do if you were the Prime Minister for one day?
Sam	Only one day? Easy. I'd make all buses free. If buses were free, people wouldn't drive into the city centre.
Aoife	Not bad. In Ireland we'd say the Taoiseach, not the Prime Minister. If I were the Taoiseach, I'd put solar panels on every school roof in the country.
Sam	In Galway? Is there enough sun?
Aoife	Very funny. Solar panels work on cloudy days too, you know. Next question: if you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
Sam	The Great Barrier Reef. I'd go diving every day. I wish I could swim better, though.
Aoife	If I were you, I'd take lessons before you go. I'd choose the Arctic. I'd love to see a polar bear before it's too late.

Useful language. Tabella 4.11 collects the phrases you need in a discussion; you met the basics in *English 1* (Unit 14).

Tabella 4.11 Useful language — taking part in a discussion

Function	Phrases
giving your opinion	*I think / I don't think… · In my opinion, … · Personally, I believe… · As far as I'm concerned, …*
asking for opinions	*What do you think? · How do you feel about…? · Do you agree?*
agreeing	*I completely agree. · Exactly. · That's a good point. · You're right.*
disagreeing politely	*I'm not sure about that. · I see what you mean, but… · I'm afraid I don't agree. · That's true, but…*
interrupting	*Sorry to interrupt, but… · Can I just add something? · Sorry, can I say something?*
suggesting	*What if we…? · How about + -ing? · Why don't we…? · We could…*
summing up	*So, to sum up… · So, we all agree that… · Shall we decide?*

Discuss the data. Before Green Week, the Link students ran a survey in Giulia's class and in Sam's Link group. Figura 4.2 shows the results. The data are invented for this book.

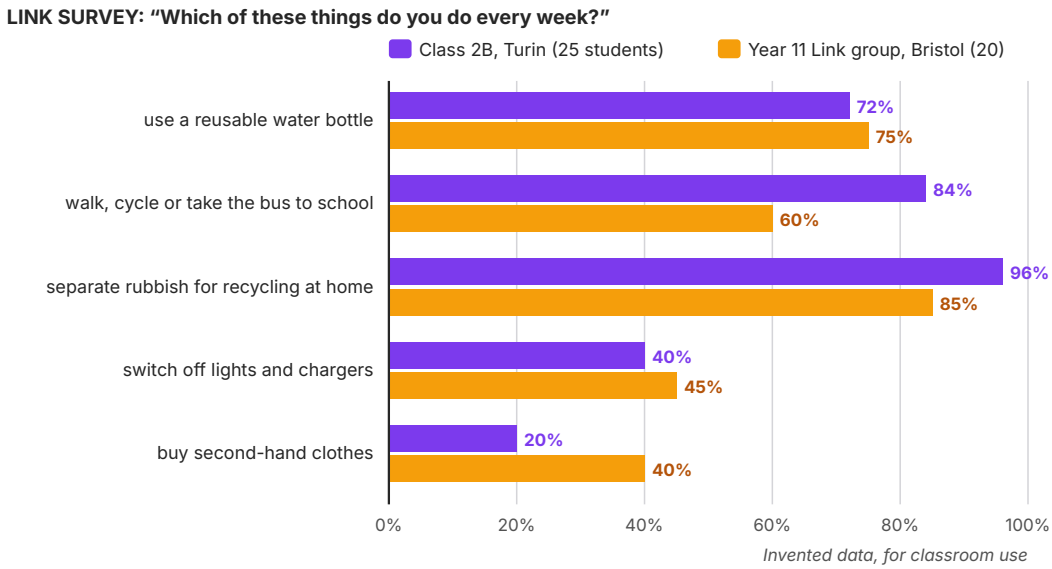


Figura 4.2 Results of the Link survey on green habits (invented data): the percentage of students who do each thing every week, in class 2B in Turin (violet) and in the Year 11 Link group in Bristol (amber).

Speaking tasks

1. **Discuss the survey.** In groups, look at the chart. Which habit is the most common in each group? Where is the biggest difference, and why do you think it exists? Use the phrases for giving and asking for opinions, and agree or disagree with each other.
2. **Role play: the school council.** In groups of four, decide on ONE green change for your school (water fountains, a swap shop, solar panels, a car-free day…). Each student must make a suggestion, interrupt politely at least once and sum up at the end. Use conditionals: *If we had…, we could…*
3. **What would you do if…?** Play Aoife's game in pairs. Ask and answer: *What would you do if you were the head teacher / you found a wallet in the street / you could change one thing about your town?* Give a reason for each answer.

4.5 Writing: An Opinion Essay

In an **opinion essay** you answer a question or react to a statement, and you give reasons for your point of view. Prof.ssa Rossi gave Giulia's class this title: *Cars should be banned from city centres. Do you agree?* Here is Giulia's essay.

Tabella 4.12 Model text — an opinion essay

Cars should be banned from city centres. Do you agree?
Many European cities are full of cars, and their centres are often noisy and polluted. Some people think that cars should be banned from city centres completely. In my opinion, this is a good idea, for two main reasons.
Firstly, without cars the air would be much cleaner. In Turin, for example, the air is often so polluted in winter that older cars are not allowed to drive into the city. If there were no cars in the centre, people would breathe cleaner air every day, not only on special days.
In addition, city centres would be safer and more pleasant. Children could walk or cycle to school without danger, and streets could become places to meet people, with trees, benches and cafés. For instance, many shopping streets in Italian cities have been closed to traffic for years, and they are full of life.
Of course, buses and trams would need to be better and cheaper, and deliveries would need special rules. However, in conclusion, I strongly believe that the advantages are much bigger than the problems. Unless we change the way we move, our cities will never be healthy places to live.

An opinion essay has a clear structure in four paragraphs, as Figura 4.3 shows.

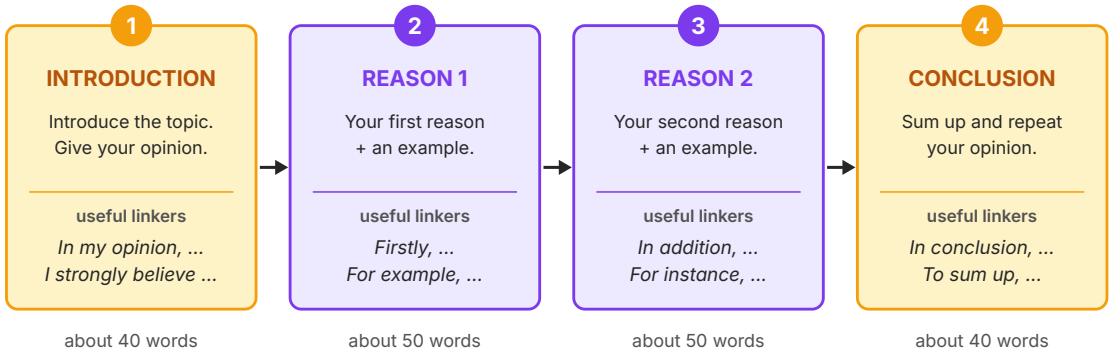


Figura 4.3 The four paragraphs of an opinion essay, with useful linkers. The introduction and the conclusion (amber) frame the two body paragraphs (violet), each with one reason and an example. The word counts are for an essay of about 180 words.

ESEMPIO SVOLTO

Analyse the model.

1. **Paragraph 1 — introduction**: the topic in general, the question in other words, and the writer's opinion (*In my opinion...*).
2. **Paragraph 2 — reason 1**, introduced by *Firstly*, with an example from real life (*In Turin, for example...*).
3. **Paragraph 3 — reason 2**, introduced by *In addition*, with another example (*For instance...*).
4. **Paragraph 4 — conclusion**: a short mention of the other side (*Of course...; However...*), then the opinion again in different words (*I strongly believe...*) and a final thought.
5. **Grammar**: second conditionals to imagine the change (*If there were no cars, people would breathe...*) and *unless* in the last sentence.
6. **Register**: neutral and formal — no contractions, no slang, no exclamation marks.

LEARNING TO LEARN

Plan before you write. Good writers spend about a quarter of their time planning. Try this method:

1. **Mind map (3 minutes).** Write the question in the middle of a page. Around it, write every idea that comes to mind, for and against, as single words. Don't judge them yet.
2. **Choose (2 minutes).** Decide your opinion. Circle the two strongest reasons for it, and one idea from the other side for the conclusion.
3. **Paragraph plan (3 minutes).** Write four lines, one per paragraph: the opinion; reason 1 + example; reason 2 + example; conclusion. Add one linker to each line.

Then write, following your plan. Notes in English help you think in English.

Checklist. Before you hand in an opinion essay, check that: (1) your opinion is clear in the introduction and again in the conclusion; (2) each body paragraph has one reason and an example; (3) you use linkers (*firstly, in addition, for example, however, in conclusion*); (4) the register is neutral, with no contractions; (5) the conditionals are correct — no *will* or *would* after *if*; (6) you are within the word limit.

Your task. Write an opinion essay (140–180 words) with one of these titles: *Schools should be plastic-free. Do you agree?* · *Young people can't do anything about climate change. Do you agree?* · *Every family should have solar panels. Do you agree?* Make a plan first, using the Learning to learn box.

4.6 Culture: Australia and the Great Barrier Reef

Australia is both a country and a continent. Its capital is not Sydney, its largest city, but **Canberra**, which was chosen as a compromise between Sydney and Melbourne. The country is divided into six states and a few territories, such as the Northern Territory. In the north-east is the state of **Queensland**, whose capital is Brisbane; and off the coast of Queensland, in the Coral Sea, lies one of the natural wonders of the world: the **Great Barrier Reef**. Figura 4.4 shows where it is.

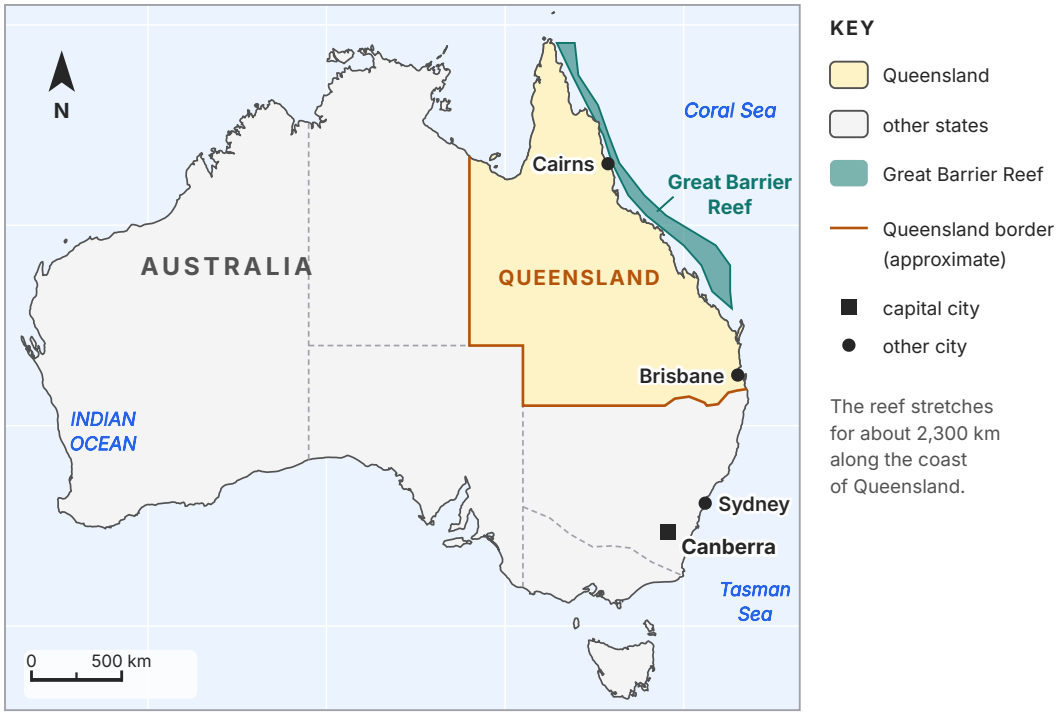


Figura 4.4 Australia, with the state of Queensland and the Great Barrier Reef (extent shown approximately). Canberra is the capital of Australia; Brisbane is the capital of Queensland.

4.6.1 A reef made by animals

The Great Barrier Reef stretches for about 2,300 kilometres along the coast of Queensland, from Cape York in the north to the area of Bundaberg in the south. It is not one single reef, but a system of more than 2,900 individual reefs and about 900 islands. The reefs are built by corals: tiny animals that live in colonies and build hard skeletons of limestone. Over thousands of years, these skeletons grow into enormous structures, which are the habitat of more than 1,600 species of fish and of turtles, sharks, dolphins and seabirds.

In 1975 a large part of the reef became a marine park, and in 1981 the Great Barrier Reef was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. Today it is protected by strict rules: fishing is forbidden in some zones, and ships must follow special routes. The reef is also important for tourism.

4.6.2 A reef in danger

The biggest threat to the reef is climate change. As the oceans get warmer, the corals suffer from bleaching (see the Collegamenti box in the Grammar section): if the water stays too hot for too long, they lose their algae, turn white and may die. The reef has experienced several

mass bleaching events, including 1998, 2002, 2016, 2017, 2020, 2022 and 2024, and many corals have died. Pollution from farms and a starfish that eats coral are other dangers. The reef can recover, but only if the corals have enough time between one heatwave and the next.

COLLEGAMENTI

History: the Great Smog of London. Air pollution is not a new problem. From 5 to 9 December 1952, a thick yellow-black fog covered London. The weather was very cold, so people burned a lot of coal at home, and factories and power stations burned coal too. An anticyclone stopped the wind: a layer of warm air lay on top of the cold air near the ground, and the smoke couldn't rise. In parts of East London the fog was so thick that people couldn't see their own feet, and travel was disrupted for days.

At the time, about 4,000 deaths were linked to the smog, and later studies suggest that the real number was much higher. The disaster led to the **Clean Air Act** of 1956, which allowed towns to create "smoke control areas", where people could only burn smokeless fuels. It was one of the first modern laws against air pollution. **Geography and science:** *If warm air lies on top of cold air, the polluted air near the ground can't rise* — a zero conditional again.

Compare with Italy

Italy has its own environmental challenges. The Po Valley (*Pianura Padana*), where Turin and Milan are, is one of the areas with the most polluted air in Europe: the Alps and the Apennines surround it, and in winter the polluted air often stays near the ground for days, as in London in 1952. On the worst days, cities like Turin stop older cars from driving. Italy has also made some early choices: non-biodegradable plastic shopping bags have been banned since 1 January 2011, and since 2021 a European law has banned single-use plastic plates, cutlery and straws in all EU countries.

Discuss. What are the biggest environmental problems where you live: traffic, smog, rubbish, the sea, the climate? What is your town or your school doing about them? If you were the mayor, what would you change first?

SINTESI

- Environment words: *climate change, pollution, emissions, renewable energy, solar panel, waste, endangered species, habitat, coral reef*; *pollution* and *waste* are uncountable.
- Collocations: *reduce waste, reuse bags, save energy, waste food, protect a habitat*.
- Negative prefixes: *unsustainable, disagree, irresponsible* (*ir-* before *r*), *illegal, impossible*.
- Zero conditional: *if* + present simple, present simple, for facts and general truths: *If you heat ice, it melts.*
- First conditional: *if* + present simple, *will* + base form; *unless* = *if ... not*, followed by an affirmative verb: *Unless we start now, nothing will change.*
- Second conditional: *if* + past simple, *would* + base form, for imaginary or unlikely situations: *If I had a boat, I'd sail to the reef.*
- Never *will* or *would* in the *if*-clause; *If I were you, I'd...* for advice; *could / might* are possible in the main clause.
- First or second: real possibility or imaginary situation, as the speaker sees it.
- *wish* + past simple for present wishes: *I wish I lived near the sea; I wish I could swim better.*
- Discussion: give and ask for opinions, agree, disagree politely (*I see what you mean, but...*), interrupt (*Sorry to interrupt, but...*), suggest (*What if we...? How about...?*).
- An opinion essay has four paragraphs: introduction with opinion, two reasons with examples, conclusion; plan it before you write.
- The Great Barrier Reef, off Queensland, is about 2,300 km long and a World Heritage Site since 1981; warmer seas cause coral bleaching. London's Great Smog (1952) led to the Clean Air Act (1956).

ESERCIZI

Vocabulary

1. ● Match the words (1–6) with the definitions (a–f). 1 habitat · 2 emissions · 3 renewable energy · 4 endangered species · 5 waste · 6 solar panel — a gases that cars and factories send into the air · b things that people throw away · c the natural home of an animal or plant · d it turns sunlight into electricity · e energy that never runs out, from the sun, wind or water · f a kind of animal that may soon disappear

2. ● Please switch off the lights when you leave the room: we need to _____ energy.
   - **A.** protect
   - **B.** save
   - **C.** reuse
   - **D.** waste

3. • Marine parks were created to _____ the coral reefs and the fish that live there.

   A. reduce
   B. waste
   C. save up
   D. protect

4. •• Complete with the correct form of *reduce, reuse, save, waste, protect*. Use each verb once. a Don't _____ water: turn off the tap while you brush your teeth. b We _____ our shopping bags again and again. c The new buses will _____ emissions in the city centre. d Laws are needed to _____ endangered species. e If you walk to school, you _____ money and keep fit.

5. •• Make the opposite with *un-, dis-, ir-, il-* or *im-*. a responsible → _____ b sustainable → _____ c agree → _____ d legal → _____ e necessary → _____ f possible → _____ g replaceable → _____ h healthy → _____

6. •• Complete with a word from Exercise 5 or from Tabella 4.3. a Throwing rubbish into a river is _____: you can get a fine. b Driving a car to the shop at the end of your street is completely _____. c Some coral reefs are _____: if we lose them, we can never make new ones. d Many people _____ with the plan, so the council will vote again. e Eating crisps every day is _____.

7. •• Odd one out. Which word does not belong? Say why. a solar panel · wind turbine · smog · renewable energy · b pollution · waste · emissions · habitat · c reduce · reuse · recycle · disappear · d unsafe · unhealthy · understand · unsustainable

Grammar

8. • Complete the zero conditional sentences with the present simple of the verbs in brackets. a If you _____ (mix) blue and yellow, you _____ (get) green. b Plants _____ (not / grow) if they _____ (not / have) water. c If the sea _____ (get) too warm, corals _____ (turn) white. d If my little sister _____ (be) tired, she _____ (cry). e If you _____ (feel) cold, _____ (put on) a jumper!

9. • Rewrite the sentences with *unless*. a If we don't leave now, we'll miss the train. b You won't get better if you don't rest. c If it doesn't rain, we'll have the swap shop outside. d The reef will die if we don't reduce emissions. e If you don't hurry, the canteen will close.

10. • If I _____ a lot of money, I'd buy an electric car.

    A. have
    B. would have
    C. had
    D. will have

11. ● What _____ if you saw a turtle caught in a plastic bag?

A. would you do
B. you would do
C. will you do
D. did you do

12. ● You won't be allowed in _____ you show your ticket.

A. if
B. when
C. so
D. unless

13. ● I wish I _____ play the guitar. It looks so easy!

A. can
B. could
C. would
D. will

14. ●● Complete the second conditional sentences. a If I _____ (be) the head teacher, I _____ (install) water fountains. b We _____ (not / need) cars if public transport _____ (be) free. c If you _____ (can) live anywhere in the world, where _____ you _____ (live)? d If Sam _____ (swim) better, he _____ (go) diving on the reef. e I _____ (not / do) that if I _____ (be) you.

15. ●● First or second conditional? Choose the correct form. a If it *is / were* sunny tomorrow, we'll have lunch in the park. b If I *am / were* a bird, I'd fly to Australia. c If the council *agrees / agreed*, the plan will start in September. d If dinosaurs still *live / lived*, the world would be very different. e If you *see / saw* Callum today, tell him about the meeting. f If I *have / had* wings, I wouldn't need a plane.

16. ●● Write a sentence with *I wish* for each situation. a I don't have a bike. b It's raining. c I can't speak Italian. d My town is very polluted. e We live far from the sea. f My brother doesn't help at home.

17. ●● Find the mistakes and correct them. a ✗ If I would have time, I would help you. b ✗ Unless you don't study, you'll fail. c ✗ If it will be sunny, we'll go to the beach. d ✗ What you would do if you were rich? e ✗ If I am you, I'd apologise. f ✗ I wish I can come to the party.

18. ●●● Translate into English. a Se scaldi l'acqua a 100 °C, bolle. b Se avessi più tempo, farei volontariato. c Vorrei che non ci fosse così tanto traffico.

Reading and Listening

19. ● Read “The Big Debate” again. True (T), false (F) or doesn’t say (DS)? a The canteen sells about three hundred drinks in plastic bottles a day. b Callum thinks one school can change the world. c Hillside already has solar panels. d Sam never cycles to school. e Sam thinks the science labs need some plastic. f Giulia’s school has water fountains in every corridor.

20. ●● Who says it: Callum, Sam or Giulia? Then say which type of conditional, or which structure, each sentence uses. a *If I were you, I’d try it.* b *If it works, we’ll go further next year.* c *If plastic gets into rivers, it ends up in the sea.* d *I wish the Green Team were a bit more patient.* e *Unless we start now, nothing will change.*

21. ●● Listening 1 (Tabella 4.9). Which ideas do the four students choose for Green Week?

    A. a bottle ban and a swap shop
    B. a car ban and a bottle ban
    C. a travel challenge and a swap shop
    D. solar panels and a travel challenge

22. ●● Listening 2 (Tabella 4.10). Answer the questions. a What would Sam do as Prime Minister, and why? b What would Aoife do as Taoiseach? c Why does Sam joke about Galway? d Where would Sam and Aoife go, and why? e What advice does Aoife give Sam?

23. ●●● Look at the survey chart (Figura 4.2). a Which habit is the most common in both groups? b Where is the biggest difference between the two groups, and how big is it? c In which habits is the Bristol group ahead? d Why does the chart use percentages and not numbers of students? e Can you use this chart as evidence in an essay? Why (not)?

Writing and Speaking

24. ●● Write five sentences about yourself: two with *I wish…*, two second conditionals (*If I…, I’d…*) and one with *unless*. Example: *I wish I lived in the mountains. If I lived in the mountains, I’d go skiing every weekend.*

25. ●● Write an opinion essay (120–150 words): *Schools should be plastic-free. Do you agree?* Use the model, the paragraph plan and the checklist.

26. ●●● Speaking. In groups of three, discuss this statement: *Every school should have solar panels.* Each student must give an opinion, agree or disagree politely, interrupt once and make one suggestion. At the end, one student sums up the discussion.

Towards B1

27. ●● Multiple-choice cloze. Choose the correct word (A, B, C or D) for each gap. *Sea turtles have lived in the oceans for millions of years, but today several species are (1) ___. Their biggest problem is plastic. If a turtle (2) ___ a plastic bag in the water, it often thinks it is a jellyfish and eats it. Turtles also lose their (3) ___ when beaches are covered with hotels. Unless we (4) ___ the beaches where they lay their eggs, their numbers will go down. If everyone (5) ___ plastic bags, the seas would be much cleaner. I wish more people (6) ___ about this.* 1 A endangered B dangerous C unsafe D disappeared · 2 A will see B sees C would see D saw · 3 A flats B habitat C house D nature · 4 A don't protect B won't protect C protect D protected · 5 A refuses B refused C will refuse D would refuse · 6 A know B will know C knew D would know

28. ●● Open cloze. Write ONE word in each gap. *What (1) ___ you do if you had a free day and no money? I'd go for a long walk in the hills near my town. If the weather (2) ___ good, I'd take a picnic. I (3) ___ take the car, because walking is better for the environment. I wish I (4) ___ more free days like that! But unless I finish my project, I (5) ___ have any free time this month. If I (6) ___ you, I'd plan a day like this too.*

29. ●●● Sentence transformation. Complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first. Use between two and five words. a If you don't water the plants, they die. → Plants die _____ water them. b I'm sorry I can't come to the swap shop. → I wish _____ to the swap shop. c My advice is to take the bus. → If _____ , I'd take the bus. d I don't have a garden, so I can't grow vegetables. → If I _____ , I could grow vegetables. e We will go out only if it stops raining. → We won't go out _____ raining.

30. ●● Short message. You are organising a swap shop at your school for Green Week. Write a message to your English friend (35–45 words): explain what a swap shop is, say when it is, and ask your friend for one idea to make it a success.

31. ●●● Article. Your school magazine is asking for articles with the title *If I could change one thing in my town*. Write an article (about 100 words): say what you would change, why, and how it would make life better.

PER APPROFONDIRE

- SWA
- EGU
- RED
- OAL

Glossario del capitolo

Climate change
cambiamento climatico — long-term changes in the Earth's temperatures and weather

Collocation
collocazione — words that often go together: *save energy*

Conditional
periodo ipotetico — a sentence with *if* + a result

Coral bleaching
sbiancamento dei coralli — corals turn white when the sea is too warm

Coral reef
barriera corallina — a structure in warm sea built by corals

Emissions
emissioni — gases sent into the air by cars, factories, etc.

Endangered species
specie in via d'estinzione — The snow leopard is an endangered species.

Habitat
habitat — the natural home of an animal or plant

Opinion essay
saggio argomentativo — an essay that gives and supports your point of view

Renewable energy
energia rinnovabile — energy from the sun, wind or water

Second conditional
periodo ipotetico della possibilità — If I had a boat, I'd sail to the reef.

Smog
smog — a mixture of smoke and fog, or polluted air

Solar panel
pannello solare — it turns sunlight into electricity

Sustainable
sostenibile — that can continue without damaging the planet

Unless
a meno che (non), se non — Unless we start now, nothing will change.

Waste
rifiuti; sprecare — things people throw away; to use badly

Wish + past simple
vorrei che, magari + congiuntivo imperfetto — I wish I lived near the sea.

Zero conditional
periodo ipotetico di tipo zero — If you heat ice, it melts.

Soluzioni

1. 1 c · 2 a · 3 e · 4 f · 5 b · 6 d

2. B — *save energy*

3. D — *protect a habitat / the reef*

4. a waste · b reuse · c reduce · d protect · e save

5. a irresponsible · b unsustainable · c disagree · d illegal · e unnecessary · f impossible · g irreplaceable · h unhealthy

6. a illegal · b unnecessary · c irreplaceable · d disagree · e unhealthy

7. a *smog* (a form of pollution; the others are about clean energy) · b *habitat* (not a problem for the environment) · c *disappear* (not one of the "three Rs" for waste) · d *understand* (*un-* is not a negative prefix here)

8. a mix, get · b don't grow, don't have · c gets, turn · d is, cries · e feel, put on

9. a Unless we leave now, we'll miss the train. · b You won't get better unless you rest. · c Unless it rains, we'll have the swap shop outside. · d The reef will die unless we reduce emissions. · e Unless you hurry, the canteen will close.

10. C — second conditional: *if* + past simple

11. A — question: *would* + subject + base form

12. D — *unless* = *if … not*

13. B — *wish* + past: *can* → *could*

14. a were (was), would ('d) install · b wouldn't need, were (was) · c could, would … live · d swam, would ('d) go · e wouldn't do, were

15. a is (first: a real possibility) · b were (second: imaginary) · c agrees · d lived · e see (first, with an imperative) · f had

16. a I wish I had a bike. · b I wish it weren't (wasn't) raining. · c I wish I could speak Italian. · d I wish my town weren't (wasn't) so polluted. · e I wish we lived near the sea. · f I wish my brother helped at home. *(Nota: con un'azione in corso si usa il past continuous: weren't raining.)*

17. a If I had time · b Unless you study · c If it is sunny · d What would you do · e If I were you · f I wish I could come

18. a If you heat water to 100 °C, it boils. · b If I had more time, I'd (would) volunteer. · c I wish there weren't (wasn't) so much traffic.

19. a T · b F (he says *of course not*, but other schools will follow) · c T (on the sports hall) · d F (he cycles when it isn't pouring with rain) · e T · f DS

20. a Giulia — second conditional (advice) · b Sam — first conditional · c Callum — zero conditional · d Sam — *wish* + past simple · e Callum — *unless* (first conditional)

21. C — *So, to sum up: a travel challenge and a swap shop.*

22. a He'd make all buses free, so people wouldn't drive into the city centre. · b She'd put solar panels on every school roof. · c Because it isn't very sunny there (but solar panels work on cloudy days too). · d Sam: the Great Barrier Reef, to dive every day; Aoife: the Arctic, to see a polar bear before it's too late. · e To take swimming lessons before he goes.

23. a Separating rubbish for recycling (96% in Turin, 85% in Bristol). · b Walking, cycling or taking the bus to school: 84% in Turin, 60% in Bristol, a difference of 24 percentage points. · c Using a reusable water bottle (75% vs 72%), switching off lights and chargers (45% vs 40%) and buying second-hand clothes (40% vs 20%). · d Because the two groups have a different number of students (25 and 20). · e No: the data are invented, and even a real survey of two small groups is too small to tell us about all students.

24. Model answer: *I wish I had more free time. I wish my school were closer to my house. If I were the mayor,*

I'd plant more trees in my town. If I could meet a famous person, I'd choose a scientist. I won't go out tonight unless I finish my homework.

25. Model answer: *Every day students use plastic bottles and wrappers at school, and most of them are thrown away after a few minutes. In my opinion, schools should become plastic-free. Firstly, it would reduce waste. If every student used a metal bottle, a big school would save hundreds of bottles a day. For example, my school installed water fountains last year, and now the bins are almost empty. In addition, schools teach by example. If young people learned to live without single-use plastic at school, they would do the same at home. Of course, some plastic, for example in science labs, is difficult to replace. However, in conclusion, I strongly believe that schools should go plastic-free step by step. Unless we change our habits now, the problem will only get worse.* (≈ 135 words) Check: four paragraphs, linkers, conditionals, neutral register.

26. Model: *A: Personally, I believe every school should have solar panels. If schools produced their own energy, they would save money. B: I see what you mean, but they're very expensive. C: Sorry to interrupt, but the government could help. B: That's true, but… A: What if we started with one school as an example? C: Good idea. So, to sum up, we all agree that solar panels are useful, but we need help to pay for them.* Check: opinion phrases, polite disagreement, an interruption, a suggestion, a summary.

27. 1 A endangered · 2 B sees (zero conditional) · 3 B habitat · 4 C protect (affirmative after *unless*) · 5 B refused (second conditional) · 6 C knew (*wish* + past simple)

28. 1 would · 2 were (was) · 3 wouldn't · 4 had · 5 won't · 6 were

29. a unless you · b I could come · c I were you · d had a garden · e unless it stops

30. Model answer: *Hi Callum! We're organising a swap shop for Green Week. Students bring clothes and books they don't need and take something else for free. It's next Friday in the gym. If you were me, how would you advertise it? Any ideas?* (≈ 42 words)

31. Model answer: *If I could change one thing in my town, I would close the centre to cars. At the moment the main square is a car park, and the air smells of petrol. If there were no cars, we could put benches, trees and a small market there. Children would play safely, and old people would have a place to meet. Shops would have more customers, because people would walk past them. Of course, we would need more buses. But I wish the council were braver: unless someone starts, nothing will change. What would you change?* (≈ 100 words) Check: a catchy start, second conditionals, *wish*, a question to the reader.