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Conditionals with Could, Might or Should

We can use other modal verbs in the second and third conditionals. They can be used in the simple past or past participle (near "if"), or they can even replace would. Those modal verbs must be in the past tense.

Modal Verbs in the Past tense

Can → Could

Will → Would

May → Might

Shall → Should

Obviously, whenever we decide to use another modal verb to replace "would", it will change the meaning of the sentence, what the sentence wants to communicate.

Could

If I were a bird, I **could fly** home.

could fly = would be able to fly

If I **could sing** as well as you, I would join the opera.

could sing = were able to sing

If I'd had enough money, I **could have gone** to Florida for vacation.

could have gone = would have been able to go

Might

If I don't get a scholarship, I **might get** a job instead of going to graduate school next fall.

I might get = maybe I will get

If you were a better student, you **might get** better grades.

you might get = maybe you would get

If you had told me about your problem, I **might have been** able to help you.

I might have been = maybe I would have been

Should indicates more uncertainty

If John **should call**, tell him I'll be back around five.

If John should call indicates a little more uncertainty or doubt than If John calls, but the meaning of the two is basically the same.

If **there should be** another world war, the continued existence of the human race would be in jeopardy.

If there should be indicates more uncertainty or doubt than If there were.