tex's french grammar
past conditional

1. formation
2. uses

The past conditional represents, as its name implies, the past of the present conditional mood. In French, the past conditional is called **le passé du conditionnel** or **le conditionnel antérieur**. Both the present and past conditional express hypothetical situations or conditions.

formation

The past conditional is a compound tense, i.e. it has two parts, an auxiliary and the past participle. The past conditional is formed with the conditional of the auxiliary (either **avoir** or **être**) and the past participle of the main verb.

Past conditional = auxiliary in the conditional + past participle

dire 'to say'	
j'**aurais dit**, I would have said	nous **aurions dit**, we would have said
tu **aurais dit**, you would have said	vous **auriez dit**, you would have said
il / elle / on **aurait dit**, he, she (it) / one would have said	ils / elles **auraient dit**, they would have said

In the past conditional (as with the passé composé), you have to choose between **avoir** and **être** as the auxiliary. While most verbs use **avoir** as an auxiliary, pronominal verbs and verbs of movement generally use **être** (see the Alamo of **être**). Just as for the passé composé with **être**, in the past conditional with **être**, the past participle agrees in gender and in number with the subject.

partir 'to leave'	
je **serais parti(e)**, I would have left	nous **serions parti(e)s**, we would have left
tu **serais parti(e)**, you would have left	vous **seriez parti(s)**, you would have left
il / elle / on **serait parti/partie**, he, she (it) / one would have left	ils / elles **seraient partis/parties**, they would have left

uses

Like the present conditional, the past conditional is used for hypotheses. Unlike the present conditional, however, it is used to describe or imagine events and actions which failed to happen. This is why it is often used to express regret about events which did not occur. In most cases, the past conditional is translated as meaning **would have** as in English. However, **j'aurais pu** means 'I could have'; **j'aurais dû** means 'I should have', and **j'aurais voulu** means 'I would have liked'.

Tex: J'**aurais aimé** être artiste.

Corey: J'**aurais voulu** être beau.

Tammy: Je n'**aurais** pas **dû** écouter Bette.

Edouard: J'**aurais pu** être un chef célèbre!

Tex: I would have liked to be an artist.

Corey: I would have liked to be handsome.

Tammy: I should not have listened to Bette.

Edouard: I could have been a famous chef!

J'AURAIS VOULU ÊTRE BEAU...

The past conditional is found in si clauses with the pluperfect. This is because **si** clauses with the pluperfect also describe events that did not occur, or rather conditions which were not fulfilled so that the event in the past conditional could occur. In the dialogue below, all the verbs in the past conditional describe events that would have happened had the original condition been fulfilled. Note that the unfulfilled condition is implied in each occurrence of the past conditional.

Tex et Edouard discutent de la vie en Amérique.

Edouard: Si tu n'avais pas vendu de T-shirts aux touristes, qu'est-ce qui **serait arrivé**?

Tex: Ben, d'un côté, je **serais resté** en France, bien sûr. Mais, de l'autre, je **n'aurais pas connu** le Texas et je **ne serais pas devenu** ami avec Tammy. Et tous mes copains ici **auraient perdu** l'occasion de connaître un philosophe distingué!

Tex and Edouard are discussing life in America.

Edouard: If you hadn't sold t-shirts to tourists, what would have happened?

Tex: Well, on the one hand, I would have stayed in France, of course. But on the other hand, I would not have seen Texas and I would not have become friends with Tammy. And all my friends here would have lost the opportunity to know a distinguished philosopher!

• possibility or uncertainty

The past conditional, like the present conditional, gives information on a past event about which the accuracy cannot be guaranteed. It is used by journalists and reporters.

Tammy et Bette regardent la télé. Soudain, leur programme préféré est interrompu et un commentateur annonce:

'Une tornade vient de s'abattre sur Hubbard, Texas. Elle **aurait fait** plusieurs victimes. Un tatou et un écureuil **auraient été** gravement blessés ... '

Presque immédiatement, le téléphone sonne. Tammy répond 'A ... , Allô?' A l'autre bout, Tex dit 'Tammy, c'est moi, Tex. Ne t'inquiète pas, on va très bien. Je rentrerai bientôt.'

Tammy and Bette are watching television. Suddenly, their favorite program is interrupted and a commentator announces:

'A tornado just struck in Hubbard, Texas. It is said to have caused several casualties. An armadillo and a squirrel seem to have been seriously wounded ...'

Almost immediately, the phone rings. Tammy answers, 'He ... , Hello?' At the other end, Tex says, 'Tammy, it's me Tex. Don't worry we're fine. I'll be home soon.'

• reported speech (indirect discourse)

Just as the conditional represents the future in a past time narration, the past conditional represents the future perfect (futur antérieur) in a past time narration to tell what someone would have done.

Tex a dit qu'il **serait rentré** plus tôt, si l'orage n'avait pas éclaté.

Tex said he would have been home sooner, if it had not stormed.

fill in the blanks

Give the past conditional of the verb indicated in parentheses.

1. Tex et Tammy _____ en France, s'ils avaient pu. (rester)

2. Tex _____ honte de ses parents, s'il les avait connus. (avoir)

3. Edouard: Je _____ en avance, si j'avais pu! (arriver)

4. Rita: J'_____ plus tôt mon mari, si j'avais pu. (quitter)

5. Tammy: Fiona et moi, nous _____ le concours, si nous avions joué. (gagner)

6. Tammy: Tex et Joe-Bob, vous _____ ma tarte aux pommes. (aimer)

7. Rita: Tex, tu _____ au Texas, si tu ne t'étais pas perdu. (grandir)

8. Tammy _____ infirmière, si elle n'avait pas fait du français. (devenir)

9. Joe-Bob _____ à A & M, s'il avait pu. (aller)

10. Tammy: Edouard, tu _____ de ketchup, si tu étais resté en France. (ne pas servir)

11. Corey _____ sans insecticide. Il adore l'insecticide. (mourir)

12. Tammy et Bette _____ toute la soirée, si Bette avait été là. (se disputer)