



WHETHER vs IF

Both whether and if are used to introduce a **yes/no** question.
Generally, **whether** is considered **more formal** than if.

Sometimes they can be used interchangeably:

Condition/ Alternative –polar (yes or no) /Alternative (X or Y).

• I don't know **if** he is coming / I don't know **whether** he is coming.
They both mean that he may or may not come. You just don't know.

But sometimes they are not interchangeable :

- Laura didn't know **whether** Mike would arrive on Monday **or** Tuesday.
There are two possibilities: Mike will arrive on Monday **or** Tuesday.
- Laura didn't know **if** Mike would arrive on Monday **or** Tuesday.
Mike will arrive on Monday **or** Tuesday **or** maybe not at all.

GENERAL RULE : Use IF when you have a conditional sentence.

Use **WHETHER** when two or more alternatives are possible.

IF with conditional sentences:

You German will improve if you study hard.

You have to start going to the gym if you want to see results soon.

WHETHER is used to introduce the first of two or more alternatives, and usually with the correlative or.

It matters little **whether we go or** stay.

The airline evaluates dozens of factors when deciding **whether** to begin, end **or** alter service to a destination.

We use WHETHER: Before “to infinitives”:

I don't know whether to buy one or two. RIGHT ✓

~~I don't know if to buy one or two.~~ WRONG ✗

We use WHETHER: After prepositions:

We were talking about whether we are exclusive. RIGHT ✓

~~We were talking about if we are exclusive.~~ WRONG ✗

WHETHER OR NOT is used with the meaning of regardless of:

Call Susan **whether or not** you come to the party.

Call Susan regardless of whether you come to the party.

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TEST

1. People can use the public beach _____ they follow the rules.
2. Children are allowed on the beach _____ they are supervised.
3. I don't know _____ a 12-year old needs supervision.
4. I can't decide _____ to move to the right or to the left.
5. I was concerned about _____ we could get cell phone reception or not.
6. (Formal) Let me know _____ you will be able to attend the conference.
7. Let's discuss _____ we should go or not.
8. They were wondering _____ to come or not.
9. (Informal) Tell me _____ you can come to the party or not.
10. It all depends on _____ or not she's got the time.