

## 10.8. Whether Vs If

*if* is used for a *conditional sentence*, whereas *whether* is used when the intent is to depict a *choice, an alternative or a possibility*. Two specific situations in which *whether* should be used:

1. After prepositions
2. After verbs

*If the currency depreciates, exports receive a boost.*

– This sentence has a *conditional* event being narrated and hence, the usage of *if* is appropriate.

*After two successive cycles of recession, the question is whether the economy will finally improve.*

– This sentence expresses uncertainty vis-à-vis economy's fate, with two possible outcomes: Economy *may* or *may not* improve. Also, since we need to decide on the usage of *if/whether* after the verb *is*, the usage of *whether* is appropriate here.

A sentence based on official question (#34, OG-13: *Beyond the immediate cash flow crisis...*):

*The General Assembly's authority to make recommendations on designated important issues, such as on peace and security, depends on if two-thirds majority of member states agree with those recommendations.*

**Analysis:** In the context of this sentence, the General Assembly's authority to make recommendations depends on two outcomes/alternatives: whether two-thirds majority of Member States agree (or disagree) with those recommendations. Also note that we need to decide on the usage of *if/whether* immediately after the preposition *on*. As mentioned above, *whether* (and not *if*) is always used after *preposition*. Hence, *whether* is the correct choice:

*The General Assembly's authority to make recommendations on designated important issues, such as on peace and security, depends on whether two-thirds majority of member states agree with those recommendations.*

Another sentence based on official question (#78, OG-13: *A proposal has been made to trim the horns...*):

*The Government is contemplating a draconian law, whereby cigarette smoking will be completely banned; the question is if people will comply with such law.*

**Analysis:** In the context of this sentence, the *choice* is between people *complying*, and *not complying* with the proposed law banning cigarette smoking. Also note that we need to decide on the usage of *if/whether* immediately after the verb *is*. As mentioned above, *whether* (and not *if*) is used after *verb*. Hence, *whether* is the correct choice:

*The Government is contemplating a draconian law, whereby cigarette smoking will be completely banned; the question is whether people will comply with such law.*

It should also be noted that the construct *whether or not* would be considered *redundant*, because we can just use *whether* (since it *already* has the element of uncertainty *inherent* in its meaning; hence we do *not* need to use *or not* along with *whether*).