

WHETHER vs IF

Both whether and if are used to introduce a **yes/no** question. If is **more common** than whether and 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** to introduce a condition

Use **WHETHER** when referring to choice or alternatives

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.

OR NOT is used with if and whether to express an alternative, but for clarity it is best to use whether rather than if when referring to choice or alternatives.

In end position (if/whether)	She wondered if/whether his story was true or not .
WHETHER OR NOT	She wondered whether or not his story was true.
IF OR NOT – Mistake	X She wondered if or not his story was true
Omitted (If/whether)	She wondered if/whether his story was true

We use **WHETHER** before “to infinitives” , not **IF**:

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

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

We use **WHETHER** after prepositions , not **IF** :

✓ We were talking about whether we are exclusive.

~~X We were talking about if we are exclusive.~~

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

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

We'll go to the game **whether or not** it rains.

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WHETHER vs IF

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.