

EXTENSION: CLARIFYING THE CONDITIONAL

"If he cared, he would have called" is logically equivalent to "Either he doesn't care, or he called."

This reformulation is profound because it reveals what the conditional minimally guarantees:

- *It rules out only one bad combination: "He cares **and** he doesn't call."*
- *It says nothing about whether calling proves he cares, or whether not calling definitively proves he doesn't care.*

"It rules out only one bad combination: 'He cares and he doesn't call.' That sounds the same as saying not calling definitively proves he doesn't care."

You're spotting a very common and understandable confusion here. Let's clarify this carefully and precisely.

No, they are not the same.

The logical statement *"If he cared, then he would call"* ($P \rightarrow Q$) **only** rules out one specific combination:

- **He cares AND he doesn't call** (P and not-Q)

That is the *only* combination that makes the conditional false. However, this does **NOT** mean that "not calling definitively proves he doesn't care."

Why the two are different:

Let's use concrete truth values:

Let:

- **P** = "He cares"
- **Q** = "He called"

The conditional $P \rightarrow Q$ is false **only** in this case:

- **P** is true **and** **Q** is false \rightarrow He cares, but he didn't call.

Now, what about the case where he **didn't call** (not-Q)? There are **two possibilities** when he doesn't call:

1. He **doesn't care** and he doesn't call \rightarrow (not-P and not-Q). This is compatible with "If he cared, he would call" being **true**.

2. He **does care** but still doesn't call \rightarrow (P and not-Q). This is the **only** case that makes the conditional false.

So when he doesn't call, we simply don't know whether he cares or not. The conditional alone does not allow us to conclude "he doesn't care."

Everyday Translation

- **Logical meaning** of "If he cared, he would call":
"It's not the case that he both cares and fails to call."
- **What it does NOT mean:**
"If he didn't call, then he definitely doesn't care."

The second statement is the **converse** of the contrapositive, and it does **not** logically follow.

This is exactly why the material conditional often feels too weak compared to ordinary language. In daily speech, when someone says "If he cared, he would call," they usually *imply* something stronger — like "Not calling would be good evidence that he doesn't care." But **logically**, the bare conditional does not license that stronger conclusion.

Quick Summary:

- "If P then Q" rules out only **P and not-Q**.
- "Not-Q therefore not-P" (If he didn't call, then he doesn't care) is a different statement.
- The first can be true even when he doesn't call — as long as the reason isn't that he cares but still fails to call.

This distinction is important because it shows the gap between:

- The **minimal logical stabilizer** (what formal logic actually gives us), and
- The **richer pragmatic meaning** we usually expect in conversation.