

If I were he...

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How many times have you heard this phrase “if I were him”. Perhaps many times, and it is possible that you think it is correct because many native speaking and “well-educated” English people have used such a phrase.

“If I were...” introduces something that is not real, and therefore the subjunctive form is required (in this case with the verb to be). In Spanish you would say “si yo fuera” ... Some English speaking mortals say “if I was”: that is incorrect.

“If I were him” is incorrect. Why?

After a form of the verb “to be” a pronoun that refers to the subject should also be in the subject form. In Spanish would you say “si yo fuera le”? No. You would say “si yo fuera él”. The grammar rules are the same in Spanish.

“If I were him” therefore is a mistake made by some unthinking minds (algunas mentes irreflexivas).

So, if I were “she” and if I were “he” are correct options.

Do not make this mistake in the Cambridge English exams, especially at Advanced and Proficiency levels.