Michael Schmidt

How to properly use 'wenn', 'als', and 'wann' in German

The three words "**wenn**, **als**, and **wann**" can all be translated as "when" or in view cases "if" into the English language. Many of my students are not sure in which situations to use which word. For this reasons I want to clarify the significance and the differences of those words in the German language. Some students have difficulty to apply this, because they need to think in each situation which word they need to use. Remember, it is all about practice. Let's clarify the use of the words:

Word	Type	Explanation	
Wenn →	Bedingung / Zukunft	Condition, or used for describing something in the future. *Example:* **Wenn** ich Geld habe, reise ich nach Deutschland (I'll travel to Germany, w**hen** I have money)	
Als ←	Satzkonnektor (Nebensatz) / Vergleich	**1.** Only used for the past and opens a subclause. *Example:* **Als** ich in Australien war, habe ich viel Steak gegessen (I have eaten steak, when I was in Australia) **2.** There is a second use of this word, in comparisons, in this case it is not translated with 'when', but with 'than'. *Example:* Brasilien ist größer **als** Deutschland (Brazil is bigger than Germany)	
wann ?	**W-Fragewort** der Zeit	Is only used in questions about time and dates, it is like a wh-question word. My recommendation is to remember this word with a question mark at the end 'wann?' *Example:* **Wann** fliegst Du nach Deutschland? (When are you flying to Germany?) **Wann** beginnt der Unterricht?	

To summarize this in one sentence: '**wenn**' is used as a condition, '**als**' is used for the past, and '**wann**' only in questions about time and dates.

Exercises
(insert 'Wann, wenn, oder als'):
1. _____ hast Du den Termin beim Arzt?
2. _____ ich in Deutschland war, ging es mir sehr gut.
3. Ich gehe nach Deutschland, _____ ich gut Deutsch sprechen kann.
4. _____ treffen wir uns morgen?
5. Du wirst den Test bestehen, _____ Du jeden Tag lernst.
6. Ich habe Gitarre gespielt, _____ ich Kind war.
7. _____ ich Hunger habe, esse ich ein Schnitzel
8. Australien ist größer _____ Deutschland.