

## THE SPANISH SUBJUNCTIVE

### Formation and Uses

#### 1. SUBJUNCTIVE FORMATION

##### 1(a). PRESENT, REGULAR VERBS

The endings for the present subjunctive are as follows:

<i>AR verbs</i>		<i>ER &amp; IR verbs</i>	
– e	– emos	– a	– amos
– es	– éis	– as	– áis
– e	– en	– a	– an

The endings above are attached to the present indicative stem.

*Examples:*

HABLAR		COMER		ESCRIBIR	
hable	hablemos	coma	comamos	escriba	escribamos
hables	habléis	comas	comáis	escribas	escribáis
hable	hablen	coma	coman	escriba	escriban

##### 1(b). PRESENT, ROOT-CHANGING VERBS

Root-changing verbs undergo the same root change in the subjunctive as they do in the indicative (i.e. 1, 2, 3 & 6):

*Examples:*

e > ie	PENSAR: piense, pienses, piense, pensemos, penséis, piensen
o > ue	PODER: pueda, puedas, pueda, podamos, podáis, puedan
u > ue	JUGAR: juegue, juegues, juegue, juguemos, juguéis, jueguen

*BUT NOTE ALSO:*

o > ue > u	DORMIR: duerma, duermas, duerma, durmamos, durmáis, duerman
e > ie > i	PREFERIR: prefiera, prefieras, prefiera, prefiramos, prefiráis, prefieran
e > i > i	PEDIR: pida, pidas, pida, pidamos, pidáis, pidan

##### 1(c). PRESENT, 1<sup>ST</sup> PERSON ORTHOGRAPHIC-CHANGING VERBS

AR verbs whose stem ends in – c, – g or – z undergo a spelling change, as do ER and IR verbs whose stem ends in – gu, – g or – c.

*Examples:*

– CAR ( <i>c &gt; qu</i> )	BUSCAR: busque, busques, busque, busquemos, busquéis, busquen.
– GAR ( <i>g &gt; gu</i> )	PAGAR: pague, pagues, pague, paguemos, paguéis, paguen.
– ZAR ( <i>z &gt; c</i> )	EMPEZAR: empiece, empieces, empiece, empecemos, empecéis, empiecen.
– GUIR ( <i>gu &gt; g</i> )	SEGUIR: siga, sigas, siga, sigamos, sigáis, sigan.
– GIR ( <i>g &gt; j</i> )	CORREGIR: corrija, corrijas, corrija, corrijamos, corrijáis, corrijan.
– CER ( <i>c &gt; zc</i> )	CONOCER: conozca, conozcas, conozca, conozcamos, conozcáis, conozcan.

### 1(d). PRESENT, 1<sup>ST</sup> PERSON IRREGULAR VERBS (ENDING – O IN INDICATIVE)

Examples:

DECIR:	diga, digas, diga, digamos, digáis, digan.
HACER:	haga, haga, haga, hagamos, hagáis, hagan.
OÍR:	oiga, oigas, oiga, oigamos, oigáis, oigan.
PONER:	ponga, ponga, ponga, pongamos, pongáis, pongan.
SALIR:	salga, salgas, salga, salgamos, salgáis, salgan.
TENER:	tenga, tengas, tenga, tengamos, tengáis, tengan.
TRAER:	traiga, traigas, traiga, traigamos, traigáis, traigan.
VENIR:	venga, vengas, venga, vengamos, vengáis, vengán.

### 1(e). PRESENT, 1<sup>ST</sup> PERSON IRREGULAR VERBS (NOT ENDING – O IN INDICATIVE)

Examples:

DAR:	dé, des, dé, demos, deis, den.
ESTAR:	esté, estés, esté, estemos, estéis, estén.
HABER:	haya, hayas, haya, hayamos, hayáis, hayan.
SABER:	sepa, sepa, sepa, sepamos, sepáis, sepan.
SER:	sea, seas, sea, seamos, seáis, sean.
IR:	vaya, vaya, vaya, vayamos, vayáis, vayan.

### 1(f). IMPERFECT, REGULAR VERBS

The endings for the imperfect subjunctive are as follows:

AR verbs	ER & IR verbs
– ara – áramos	– iera – iéramos
– aras – arais	– ieras – ierais
– ara – aran	– iera – ieran

The endings above are attached to the present indicative stem.

Examples:

HABLAR	COMER	ESCRIBIR
hablara <b>habláramos</b>	comiera <b>comiéramos</b>	escribiera <b>escribiéramos</b>
hablaras <b>hablarais</b>	comieras <b>comáis</b>	escribieras <b>escribierais</b>
hablara <b>hablaran</b>	comiera <b>coman</b>	escribiera <b>escribieran</b>

### 1(g). IMPERFECT, IRREGULAR VERBS

With verbs that are irregular in the preterite, (1) **use the 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural preterite stem**, then (2) **add the ER / IR imperfect subjunctive endings listed above**.

Examples:

ESTAR:	<u>estuviera</u> , <u>estuvieras</u> , <u>estuviera</u> , <u>estuviéramos</u> , <u>estuvieran</u> .
HACER:	<u>hiciera</u> , <u>hicieras</u> , <u>hiciera</u> , <u>hiciéramos</u> , <u>hicierais</u> , <u>hicieran</u> .
TENER:	<u>tuviera</u> , <u>tuvieras</u> , <u>tuviera</u> , <u>tuviéramos</u> , <u>tuvierais</u> , <u>tuvieran</u> .

**BUT NOTE ALSO:**

IR/SER:	fuera, fueras, fuera, fuéramos, fuerais, fueran.
DECIR:	dijera, dijeras, dijera, dijéramos, dijerais, dijeran.

## 2. SUBJUNCTIVE USES

- The *subjunctive* is frequently used to imply **uncertainty** or **subjectivity**, whereas the *indicative* implies **certainty** or **objectivity**.
- In addition, there are a number of **conjunctions** that always take the subjunctive, and others that require a subjunctive or indicative **depending on the time frame**.
- Furthermore, in **relative (dependent) clauses** (introduced by the relative pronoun “que”), the subjunctive is used if the antecedent (i.e. noun/noun phrase) in the **main (independent) clause** is *negative* or *indefinite*.
- A number of conditional sentences (“if” clauses) also require the use of a subjunctive in different tenses.
- Certain verbs require the subjunctive (in main or relative clauses) when expressing **emotions (wishes, regrets, etc.)** or **negative beliefs and opinions**.

Examples of each of the above categories follow.

### 2(a). CERTAINTY / OBJECTIVITY – UNCERTAINTY / SUBJECTIVITY

Consider the following examples:

**INDICATIVE**

Javier va al colegio en metro.  
**Todos sabemos que** Javier no va al colegio en metro.  
**Es cierto que** Javier nunca va al colegio en metro.  
**No dudo que** Javier va al colegio en metro.  
**Raúl me dijo que** Javier no va al colegio en metro.  
*etc...*

**SUBJUNCTIVE**

**Es posible que** Javier vaya al colegio en metro.  
**Dudo que** Javier vaya al colegio en metro.  
**Es bueno que** Javier no vaya al colegio en metro.  
**Es poco probable que** Javier nunca vaya al colegio en metro.  
**Es extraño que** Javier vaya al colegio en metro.  
*etc...*

### 2(b). CONJUNCTIONS

The following conjunctions are *always* followed by the subjunctive:

<b>Para que, a fin de que</b>	So that
<b>Con tal que, siempre que</b>	Provided that
<b>A menos que</b>	Unless
<b>Antes de que</b>	Before
<b>Sin que</b>	Without (that)
<b>Dado que</b>	Given that
<b>Por miedo de que</b>	For fear that
<b>De modo, manera que</b>	In such a way that

*Examples:* **Hay que reparar el techado para que no entre agua**, it is necessary to repair the roof so that water doesn't get in.

**Subieron sin hacer ruido, por miedo de que despertaran a los niños**, they went up in silence for fear of waking the children.

The subjunctive is required in *adverbial clauses* after the following conjunctions (when future time, uncertainty or supposition is implied):

<b>Cuando</b>	When
<b>Hasta que</b>	Until
<b>Tan pronto como / en cuanto</b>	As soon as
<b>Mientras</b>	As long as
<b>Después (de) que</b>	After
<b>Aunque</b>	Even if

*Examples:* **Cuando tenga dinero, iré a verlo**, When I have money, I'll go and see him.

*BUT:* **Cuando viene a verme, siempre me trae regalos**, When he comes to see me, he always brings me presents (i.e. regular occurrence).

If the conjunction introducing a subjunctive has a corresponding prepositional form, the infinitive is used after the prepositional form when the subjects of the main and dependent clauses are the same:

<i>Conjunction</i>		<i>Prepositional form</i>	
<b>Para que</b>	In order that	<b>Para</b>	In order to
<b>A fin de que</b>	In order that	<b>A fin de</b>	In order to
<b>En caso de que</b>	In case (that)	<b>En caso de</b>	In case
<b>Por miedo de que</b>	For fear that	<b>Por miedo de</b>	For fear of
<b>Sin que</b>	Without	<b>Sin</b>	Without
<b>Cuando</b>	When	<b>Al</b>	When, on – ing
<b>Hasta que</b>	Until	<b>Hasta</b>	Until
<b>Antes (de) que</b>	Before	<b>Antes de</b>	Before
<b>Después (de) que</b>	After	<b>Después de</b>	After

*Example:* **Quiero hacer muchas cosas antes de irme**, I want to do a lot of things before I go away.

*BUT:* **Quiero verte antes de que te vayas**, I want to see you before **you** leave.

## 2(c). NEGATIVE AND INDEFINITE ANTECEDENTS

The subjunctive is used in *adjectival clauses* (i.e. modifying the noun) introduced by a relative pronoun, after a negative or indefinite antecedent:

*Examples:* **No he encontrado a nadie que\* le conozca**, I haven't met anyone who knows him.  
**Busco un alumno que hable español**, I'm looking for a pupil who speaks Spanish (indefinite, therefore no personal *a* required).

\* **nadie que** can also be replaced by **quien**.

*BUT:* **Busco a ese alumno que habla español**, I looking for that pupil who speaks Spanish (definite, therefore the personal *a* is now required).

## 2(d). CONDITIONAL SENTENCES & “IF” CLAUSES

*Examples:* Si vendes tu coche, yo lo compraré.  
If you sell your car, I will buy it.

Si **vendieras** tu coche, yo lo compraría.  
If you sold (“were to sell”) your car, I would buy it.

Si **hubieras vendido** tu coche, yo lo **hubiera (habría) comprado**.  
If you had sold your car, I would have bought it.

**Note:** **si**, meaning *if*, cannot be followed by the present subjunctive, the future indicative or the conditional indicative. When **si** means *whether*, it can be followed by any tense:

*Example:* **No sé si vendrá**, I don’t know whether he will come.

## 2(e). EXPRESSING EMOTIONS, DESIRE, NEGATIVE BELIEFS

In *main clauses*, the subjunctive is used:

- to express the imperative with **usted**, **ustedes** and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> persons  
**¡Hable (Vd.)!** Speak! **¡Hablen (ustedes)!** Speak! **¡Hablemos!** Let’s speak.
- to express a wish:  
**¡Que seas feliz!** (May you) be happy! **¡Ojalá (que) vinieran!** I wish they would come!
- to express all negative imperatives:  
**¡Vete (tú)!** Go! *But* **¡No te vayas!** Don’t go!

In *dependent (subordinate) clauses*, the subjunctive is used:

In *noun clauses after the following verbs*:

Verbs of wishing, asking, ordering, allowing, forbidding, preventing, denying:

<b>Querer que</b>	To wish that
<b>Rogar que</b>	To ask that
<b>Preferir que</b>	To prefer that
<b>Aconsejar que</b>	To advise that
<b>Mandar que</b>	To order that
<b>Permitir que</b>	To allow that
<b>Dejar que</b>	To allow that
<b>Prohibir que</b>	To forbid that
<b>Impedir que</b>	To prevent that
<b>Negar que</b>	To deny that

*Examples:* **Aconsejamos que lo hagas**, we advise you to do it.  
**Mandaron que saliesen**, they ordered them to leave.

Verbs of emotion expressing sorrow, fear, hope, pleasure, doubt, surprise:

<b>Sentir que</b>	To be sorry that
<b>Temer que</b>	To fear that
<b>Esperar que</b>	To hope that
<b>Esperar a que</b>	To wait for
<b>Alegrarse de que</b>	To be happy that
<b>Extrañarse que</b>	To be surprised that
<b>Sorprenderse de que</b>	To be surprised that
<b>Negar que</b>	To deny that

*Examples:* **Siento que no esté aquí**, I'm sorry he's not here.

**Me alegraba de que hiciese buen tiempo**, I was glad it was good weather.

**Me extraño que haya llegado tan temprano**, I'm surprised that he has arrived so early.

Verbs of saying, thinking, believing, giving opinions in the negative:

<b>No decir que</b>	To not say that
<b>No creer que</b>	To not believe that
<b>No pensar que</b>	To not think that
<b>No ver que</b>	To not see that
<b>No opinar que</b>	To not be of the opinion that

Impersonal verbs, *except* those implying certainty or fact:

<b>Hace falta que</b>	It is necessary that
<b>Es preciso que</b>	It is essential that
<b>Importa que</b>	It is important that
<b>Conviene que</b>	It is right that
<b>Es posible que</b>	It is possible that
<b>Puede que</b>	It may be that
<b>No es cierto que</b>	It's not certain that

*Examples:* **Importa que llegues temprano**, it's important that you arrive early.  
**No es cierto que venga**, it's not certain that he's come.

*BUT:* **Es cierto que viene hoy**, it's certain that he'll come today.

## AVOIDING THE SUBJUNCTIVE

It is considered good practice to avoid the subjunctive and use the infinitive instead if the subject of the main clause is the same as the subject of the dependent (subordinate) clause:

*Examples:* **Siento mucho llegar tarde**, I'm sorry that I am late.  
**Espero poder hacerlo mañana**, I hope to be able to do it tomorrow.

*BUT:* **Espero que lo puedas hacer mañana**, I hope that you can do it tomorrow.

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