

THE SPANISH SUBJUNCTIVE

Formation and Uses

1. SUBJUNCTIVE FORMATION

1(a). PRESENT, REGULAR VERBS

The endings for the present subjunctive are as follows:

AR verbs

– e – emos
– es – éis
– e – en

ER & IR verbs

– a – amos
– as – áis
– a – an

The endings above are attached to the present indicative stem.

Examples:

HABLAR

hable hablemos
hables habléis
hable hablen

COMER

coma comamos
comas comáis
coma coman

ESCRIBIR

escriba escribamos
escribas escribáis
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 > **í** > **i** PEDIR: pida, pidas, pida, pidamos, pidáis, pidan

1(c). PRESENT, 1ST 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 (*c* > **qu**) BUSCAR: busque, busques, busque, busquemos, busquéis, busquen.
– GAR (*g* > **gu**) PAGAR: pague, pagues, pague, paguemos, paguéis, paguen.
– ZAR (*z* > **c**) EMPEZAR: empiece, empieces, empiece, empecemos, empecéis, empiecen.
– GUIR (*gu* > **g**) SEGUIR: siga, sigas, siga, sigamos, sigáis, sigan.
– GIR (*g* > **j**) CORREGIR: corrija, corrijas, corrija, corrijamos, corrijáis, corrijan.
– CER (*c* > **zc**) CONOCER: conozca, conozcas, conozca, conozcamos, conozcáis, conozcan.

1(d). PRESENT, 1ST 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:	pongas, 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, venga, venga, vengamos, vengáis, vengan.

1(e). PRESENT, 1ST 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, haya, 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 habláramos	comiera comiéramos	escribiera escribiéramos
hablaras hablarais	comieras comáis	escribieras escribierais
hablara hablaran	comiera coman	escribiera escribieran

1(g). IMPERFECT, IRREGULAR VERBS

With verbs that are irregular in the preterite, (1) **use the 3rd 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.
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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:

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

Examples: **Hay que reparar el techo 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):

Cuando	When
Hasta que	Until
Tan pronto como / en cuanto	As soon as
Mientras	As long as
Después (de) que	After
Aunque	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>	
Para que	In order that	Para	In order to
A fin de que	In order that	A fin de	In order to
En caso de que	In case (that)	En caso de	In case
Por miedo de que	For fear that	Por miedo de	For fear of
Sin que	Without	Sin	Without
Cuando	When	Al	When, on – ing
Hasta que	Until	Hasta	Until
Antes (de) que	Before	Antes de	Before
Después (de) que	After	Después de	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 1st and 3rd 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:

Querer que	To wish that
Rogar que	To ask that
Preferir que	To prefer that
Aconsejar que	To advise that
Mandar que	To order that
Permitir que	To allow that
Dejar que	To allow that
Prohibir que	To forbid that
Impedir que	To prevent that
Negar que	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:

Sentir que	To be sorry that
Temer que	To fear that
Esperar que	To hope that
Esperar a que	To wait for
Alegrarse de que	To be happy that
Extrañarse que	To be surprised that
Sorprenderse de que	To be surprised that
Negar que	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:

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

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

Hace falta que	It is necessary that
Es preciso que	It is essential that
Importa que	It is important that
Conviene que	It is right that
Es posible que	It is possible that
Puede que	It may be that
No es cierto que	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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