

The Subjunctive Mood

The **subjunctive mood** is typically used in dependent clauses which express a condition which is doubtful or counterfactual. It can also be used to emphasize a doubt, desire, supposition, hypothesis, command or purpose.

Note: the necessity of the subjunctive mood in the English language is widely debated. Advocates suggest it is valuable and makes English more descriptive for those who understand its usage. Critics suggest that it merely mirrors the indicative tense and therefore is superfluous and should be removed entirely.

The subjunctive mood differs from the indicative tense in three circumstances:

1) In the present tense of verbs in the third person singular (he, she, it) verb.

Subjunctive Example: It was required that he move forward.

Indicative Example: It was required that he moves forward.

In this example, the subjunctive verb “*he move*” is used to place emphasis on the requirement, rather than on the man himself.

Directions: Circle the correct form of the verb in the following sentences.

1. She recommends that each server (reports, report) their tips.
2. The mouse (wants, want) to eat the cheese.
3. Let that child (eat, eats) cake everyday.
4. I suggested that John (leave, leaves) on Tuesday.
5. He requires that everyone in the office (types, type) faster.
6. They (asked, ask) me to leave the room.

Directions: Write two of you own sentences using the present subjunctive tense for third person singular subjects.

1) _____

2) _____

2) In the present tense of the verb “to be”.

Subjunctive Example: It was ordained that he be king from this day onward.

Indicative Example: It was ordained that he is king from this day onward.

In this example, the subjunctive “*he be*” is used to place emphasis on the fact that something has been ordained, rather than on the king himself.

Directions: Circle the correct form of the verb in the following sentences.

1. It is required that they (are, be) at work at three o’clock.
2. You (are, is) my best friend.
3. Let you (is, be) the next president of the country.
4. This book (be, is) very interesting.
5. I recommend you (are, be) at work on time.
6. It was required that he (act, acts) proper.

Directions: Write two of you own sentences using the present subjunctive tense for the verb “to be”.

1) _____

2) _____

3) In the past tense of the verb “to be”.

Subjunctive Example: If I were you, I wouldn’t feed the tiger.

Indicative Example: If I was you, I wouldn’t feed the tiger.

In this example, the subjunctive “*were*” is used to place emphasis on the conditional tone of the act in question (feeding the tiger), rather than on the notion that these two people would switch identities.

Directions: Circle the correct form of the verb in the following sentences.

1. If I (was, were) you, I would run.
2. He (was, were) about to leave.
3. They act as though candy (were, was) good for you.
4. He is going to wish he (was, were) dead.
5. You shall abide by it, as though it (was, were) the law.

Directions: Write two of you own sentences using the past subjunctive tense for the verb “to be”.

1) _____

2) _____