

Chapter 28: The Present Subjunctive

Chapter 28 covers the following: the formation of the present subjunctive in all conjugations; and two uses of the subjunctive mood: jussive (which is used as the main verb in a sentence) and the purpose clause (which is a type of subordinate clause). At the end of the lesson we'll review the vocabulary which you should memorize in this chapter.

There are three important rules to remember in this chapter: (1) The subjunctive is the mood of "uncertainty," though in practice it often merely signals subordination. (2) "She reads a diary." (3) Purposes clauses are introduced by *ut* or *ne*.

The subjunctive mood is the last of the moods left in Latin to cover. It's distinct from ... well, do you remember the other moods? What's the mood of fact? The indicative. And the mood of command? The imperative. And all three of those moods are also distinct from infinitives and participles. In other words, a verb can be indicative or imperative or an infinitive or a participle, or now subjunctive, but it can't be two of any of those.

The simplest way to look at the subjunctive is to see it as the opposite of the indicative. Where the indicative represents fact, the subjunctive reflects uncertainty, or as the grammar books say: "potentiality, volition (wishing), exhortation (urging), prohibition, deliberation, and so on." A simpler way to look at it is the subjunctive is used when speakers feel somehow uncertain about supporting the truth of the statement they're making. This can include hopes, wishes, even impossibilities — for example, "If it were raining (but it's not), ...we would not be standing outside (like we are — so stop whining about the weather!)." Another important use of the subjunctive in Latin is to generalize the action of the verb, that is, not speak about a particular actual circumstance but a general rule, "Whenever it rains, ..." (as a rule we don't stand around outside). But those are only two of the most common uses of the subjunctive. There are several others as we'll discover in a moment. The linguist L.R. Palmer sums up the situation neatly: "It is ... merely an exercise in ingenuity to attempt to explain the 'unity of the Latin subjunctive'..."

If you've studied any of the Romance languages — French, Italian, Spanish, the languages into which Latin evolved, "modern Latin," so to speak — you've probably already encountered subjunctive forms. There, among their other uses, they serve to indicate that the verb is in a subordinate clause of some sort. In other words, it's finite but it's not the main verb of the sentence. While indicating subordination was not the original purpose of the subjunctive — it couldn't have been; there wasn't a sophisticated clause system in Proto-Indo-European — already by pre-classical Latin the subjunctive was beginning to take on that role, to show that the verb was not the main verb but governed by some sort of clause or other. Thus, in Latin almost as far back as we can see, the subjunctive doesn't necessarily always signal uncertainty. Sometimes, it says "*Eho Romani! Sumus in clauso!*" especially *clausi* whose subordinate nature the *Romani* felt needed a little highlighting. Ultimately, a syntactic "highlighter" underscoring a verb's subordinate nature is not a bad way of thinking about the direction in which the subjunctive was evolving during Roman times.

The result is that by classical Latin (in the 1st century BCE) half, if not more, of subjunctives are found in clauses, many of which don't contain any dramatically uncertain sense, clauses that

begin “if, when(ever), so that, such that, although, the type who,” along with quite a few others. That’s why you haven’t seen sentences with these sorts of clauses in them so far. You need to know the subjunctive. And soon you will! On top of that, the subjunctive is sometimes found in main sentences, and when it is, there it does often retain its original sense of uncertainty. So the subjunctive does, in fact, have an independent use too — the jussive, as you’re about to discover — but these independent uses make up far and away the minority of the subjunctive verbs found in Latin.

The upshot is that there’s no single English form which you can use to translate the Latin subjunctive, nothing even close. The English verb system simply offers nothing directly comparable to Latin here. While you’ll learn that “might, may, let, would, should, could, were” and a few other English modals can be used to represent the Latin subjunctive, more often than not, where Latin uses the subjunctive, nothing at all is attached to the English verb.

The reality is that much of the time you’ll just look at a Latin verb, identify it as subjunctive, figure out the type of clause it’s in (a clause you’ve learned takes the subjunctive) and translate it the way English expresses that type of clause. In other words, you won’t translate the subjunctive as such. Why? You can’t. English doesn’t have a fully operative subjunctive. It did once, but our subjunctive today is only the faintest heartbeat of an all-but-dead form. For the ancient Romans, however, the subjunctive was very much alive and kicking, meaning you have to know when a Latin verb is in the subjunctive mood — it’s an essential step in translating Latin sentences correctly — so without an English word in your translation to show you know the verb’s subjunctive, there must be some way for you to demonstrate your understanding of the grammar underlying a Latin sentence that contains a subjunctive verb.

So here’s what we’ll do. If a Latin verb is subjunctive and in a certain type of clause, translate it using the English equivalent for expressing that construction. Often I can tell you know the verb is subjunctive from the way you translate the clause, but if I have any uncertainty in that regard, I can ask you “What mood and why?” which I will often. We’ll talk more about that later. When you’re translating isolated verbs, like you do on worksheets or tests, then write (S) after your translation to show you know the verb’s subjunctive. Some Latin teachers have their students include “may, might,” when they’re translating Latin subjunctive verbs, but I don’t like that, since the vast majority of the time you’re not going to include those words in your English translation of a Latin subjunctive. Why learn a habit you’re just going to have to unlearn later? So if you’re translating, let’s say, *scribant*, an example of a Latin subjunctive verb form — it’s the subjunctive for “they write” — put (S) after your translation, for instance, “they write (S).”

Remember this too: there are no subjunctive infinitives or participles. [While I’m willing to advocate for “willing do,” I do not subscribe to “may-ing do” or “were-d been done.”] So subjunctives are always finite verbs, and just like indicatives, they’ll use the personal endings you began learning Day 1 (-o, -s, -t, ...). That is, the subjunctive employs the same personal endings used in the indicative. Nothing new to learn there! Or to look at it another way, finite verbs can only be indicative or subjunctive. None of the other verb forms like infinitives or participles use personal endings. So you see a personal ending; the verb’s either indicative or subjunctive, fact or fiction (or in a clause). That also means it has to be the main verb of the sentence or the main verb of a clause.

Rather than me showing you how to form the subjunctive, let's make this a game. You tell me how Latin most likely indicated that a verb in the present-tense system was subjunctive. Think about it. How did the Romans indicate anything notable like tense or person in a present-tense-system verb? They used markers inserted into a verb, creating four parts: a base, a thematic vowel, a tense sign, a personal ending. The subjunctive has to fit inside one of these somehow. But which one? Which one is the most natural home for showing that a verb is subjunctive? That depends, of course, on what each part shows.

What does the base show? The verb's meaning. Would it make sense to put a subjunctive marker there, to have a whole separate form for every verb like an extra principal part of some sort that meant the verb was subjunctive? Sounds like you just massively increased the number of verb forms in your language. Now I'm sure there are languages that do that, and I'm equally sure the Romans conquered the people who spoke those languages and made them speak Latin. So we don't care about them. No, it can't be the base. That's for meaning. What else is there? What about the tense marker? Same thing. That's for tense, not mood. Leave it alone. What about personal endings, what signals the person, number and voice of a verb? Gods forbid! Aren't those busy enough? You already have twelve. You want twenty-four? No, get your moody mitts off those endings! So, the only thing left is the thematic vowel which signals conjugation. They are only three or four of those, so that at least is a possibility. But what's a Latin verb going to sound like to a Roman if you use a different thematic vowel? Wrong! That's what it's going to sound like. Not *amat*, but *amet* or *amit* or *amut*? That sounds Egyptian. But you have to admit, by messing up the thematic vowel, you definitely got my Latin attention — which, when you think about it, is a good thing if you want to use the subjunctive to highlight things you feel you need to stress, like uncertainty or subordination. So that must be it. The thematic vowel changes to indicate the subjunctive. But how? Just make the thematic vowel sound different.

Here's a great easy way to remember how the Romans did it: "She reads a diary." Each of the vowels in the English sentence is the same as the subjunctive vowel used in each of the Latin conjugations in order: *-e-* for first, *-ea-* for second, *-a-* for third, and *-ia-* for third-*io* and fourth. So for instance, change the thematic vowel in a first-conjugation present-tense verb from *-a-* to *-e-* and you've turned the verb from present indicative to present subjunctive. If it's second-conjugation, change it from *-e-* to *-ea-*; in third *-i-* (or *-u-*) to *-a-*; and in third-*io* or fourth turn the normal thematic vowel *-i-* into *-ia-*. Here's a chart — love charts! — showing a representative verb from each conjugation in its subjunctive form: "She" *amem, ames, amet, ...*; "reads" *habeam, habeas, habeat, ...*; "a" *agam, agas, agat, ...*; "diary" *sciam, scias, sciat, ...*, and *fugiam, fugias, fugiat, ...* Notice anything unusual or notable?

Look at the first-person singular subjunctive in third, third-*io* and fourth. It's exactly the same as the future!! In other words, *-am* here can mean either "I (may, might, whatever)" (subjunctive), or "I will ..." (future). Not so the other forms, where the future will have *-e-*, e.g. *ages*, "you will drive," or the subjunctive *-a-*, e.g. *agas*, "you drive (S)." What does that say about Latin? [No, not that! I told you to stop with the bad language, or I'll invent another mood. Would you like that? Then behave.] It must mean the Romans had no problem telling future from subjunctive, at least not in the first-person singular, or they would have created separate forms, so it must not be a problem when you get to translating real Latin. Granted, it's kind of annoying

when you're first learning it. [Certainly didn't make my little teenage self love the Classical Age.] Hey, I've got an idea! Wanna make these subjunctive forms passive? Yeah, sure you do.

It's simple as can be. The subjunctive has nothing to do with voice, so there's nothing new to learn here, except to note that, just like in the active, *-ar-* in third conjugation can be subjunctive or future. What's going on here? Ding-dong! It's linguistics time again. Skip ahead if you're not interested, but for the nerds in the audience I'll try to make a little more sense of all this subjunctivational nonsense. Proto-Indo-European, the mother tongue of Latin and many other languages, indicated the subjunctive mood by lengthening the vowel or changing it so it was more colorful, so you noticed it. *Amas. Ames!* Big juicy-sounding *a*'s and *e*'s seem to have been the Indo-Europeans' preference, and Latin as an Indo-European product carried on this tradition.

Along with this came the sensibility that the subjunctive shows uncertainty, the equivalent of adding "might, could, let" to an English verb, and "will," too, if speakers felt that what they were saying might somehow possibly not actually but only hopefully happen in the future. So Proto-Indo-European definitely had a way of signaling that the speaker felt dubious about what was being said, the subjunctive. It meant "This might happen. Wouldn't count on it." What Proto-Indo-European didn't have was a true future, a way of saying "This will happen! I just feel so good about it! It's part of my healthy positive outlook on life!" Apparently Indo-Europeans didn't feel that way, ever. To judge from their grammar, they were universally depressed. Maybe that's why they migrated. They needed a change of scenery. Travel can do you a lot of good. The result was that none of the Indo-European daughter languages inherited a true future.

When the time came for feeling good about what lies ahead — apparently, conquering the world improves a person's mood ("mood"! get it?) — they all had to make up some way of speaking with certainty about the future. After all, Grampa Indo-European hadn't left them any way to do it in his will ("will"! get it?), and that's exactly what they did, including the Romans. Latin, like many of its linguistic compadres, took a few of the subjunctive markers it inherited from Proto-Indo-European and arbitrarily just redefined them as future, particularly the ever-popular strong-sounding *-a-* and *-e-* which now moved from meaning "might, or will probably" to "will definitely," like "we will definitely defeat the Carthaginians."

Easy to say, not so easy to do, not only because Carthaginians are very good fighters, but because there aren't a whole lot of subjunctive markers to reassign to the future. Vowels in general were a limited resource in the Romans' linguistic economy — come on, they got like ten total, if you include both long and short — and the majority, especially the colorful ones, were already being used as thematic vowels. But that particular problem wasn't equally problematical across the conjugational board. Third, third-*io* and fourth? No problem. If the normal thematic vowel is a colorless short *-ĕ-* (3rd) or *-i-* (third-*io* and fourth), not *-a-* or *-e-*, you've got a splendidous *-a-* to use as your subjunctive marker and *-e-* as a future marker.

But in first conjugation where *-a-* is already being used as a thematic vowel, so the subjunctive marker has to be *-e-* (the only other wildly chromatic choice), what do you do? Same holds true for second conjugation, except here it's the *-e-* (not *-a-*) thematic vowel that causes the problem. So in first and second, there's no choice but to create a whole new form for the future. And you know the answer. What did the Romans use as their future marker in first and second

conjugation? *-bi-*, a wholly Roman invention. And where did they get that_[AL1]? Hard to say. The *-i-* is probably the same *-i-* seen in *eris* and *erit*. Long story there. Let's not get into it, except to say *-bi-* meaning "will" is not seen as such in other Indo-European languages. The *-b-* is also a question but surely it's the same *-b-* seen in the imperfect *-ba-*. The question is where did the Romans find it? In some future discount "bi"n? All that can be said for certain is that *-bi-* did not have to be used in third, third-*io* and fourth conjugations because it's not needed there. It's only necessary in first and second which is why it shows up there and only there, well, in classical Latin at least. Early Roman authors use it ... Never mind. Enough linguistics for now.

Back to the subjunctive and its uses, which are mostly inside dependent clauses, like purpose, result, indirect question, *cum* clauses, a few conditions, indirect command, fearing clauses, relative clauses of characteristic, subordinate clauses in indirect discourse, ... and the jussive, one of its few independent incarnations. [That was a scary glimpse into the future, wasn't it? Sorry, won't do that again.] Let's start with the only fully independent use of the subjunctive you're responsible for in this class, the jussive subjunctive, one of the few ways this mood — remember, the subjunctive is a mood! — can function as the main verb of a sentence. "Jussive" means "giving an order." You know it from the verb *iubeo*, ... *iubere*, *iussi*, *iussum* ("order, command"), so the "jussive" subjunctive is the "ordering" subjunctive. It adds a sense of "let" or "may" to the main sentence, for instance, *Moveamus!*, meaning "Let's move!" And it's negated with *ne*, as in *Ne moveamus!*, "Let's not move!"

The other use of the subjunctive introduced in this chapter is the purpose clause, one of the many dependent usages we'll study. It corresponds to English "in order to (or just 'to'), so that, in order that, ..." as in "I went there (in order) to have lunch." or "...so that I might have lunch." Any English clause will work here which shows the purpose or intention of an action. Even the infinitive, "to do something," can be used in English to express purpose, which is why "to have lunch" can show purpose. But Latin doesn't use infinitives for this purpose — well, not prose authors, and even in Latin verse the infinitive of purpose is relatively rare. So forget it, at least for now. As far as you're concerned, Latin uses an assortment of clauses and phrases to express purpose but not the infinitive. We'll learn a number of those purpose constructions in this class.

The formula the Romans used to create a purpose clause is very simple: *ut* plus a subjunctive verb. Here, *ut* serves as the counterpart of English "so that, in order that [or just 'that']," for instance, *hīc venit ut tibi dicat*, meaning "he is coming here in order that he (may) speak to you." Note that English could use just an infinitive here — "he is coming here to speak with you" — and that's a perfectly fine translation. Its grammar is just very different from the way Latin expresses the purpose construction, and I think it's always easier to translate when there's a more direct one-to-one correspondence between Latin and English words. In other words, if "that" is directly equivalent to *ut*, then "that" seems like a far easier way to translate the Latin, but do what you like. It's your life. And your grade.

A negative purpose clause, used when the point is to explain why someone avoided doing something, in Latin begins with *ne*, meaning "in order that ... not" — or "not to" if you want to use the infinitive — for example, *nos fugit ne poenas det*, meaning "he is fleeing from us in order that he not pay the penalty." Note the lack of ending on "pay" here in English. It's proper grammar to say in a clause like this "he pay," not "he pays," i.e. not to use a third-person

singular -s ending. This is, in fact, one of the last smoldering embers of the subjunctive in English. It will probably die out completely soon, so you choose: old stuffy-sounding, grammar-teacher-approved subjunctive verbs without verb endings, or new forms that may irritate your elders and other people who give you grades. I won't judge or grade you whichever way you choose. I'm your Latin teacher. I couldn't care the least about English. Of course, you can avoid the problem altogether by saying "... not to pay the penalty," which is probably one reason infinitives of purpose are so popular in English. They circumvent the archaic subjunctive. Just like an indirect statement needs a "verb of the head" (or some sort of "thinking" thought in the main sentence), a purpose clause needs the main sentence to contain a sense of motion or direction which the purpose clause can then explain, for instance, "I am coming (a verb of motion) in order to free you." Or, "They attacked us in order to harm you." Or even, "I put on my best tie in order to impress my boss."

Finally — I mentioned this briefly above — here's how you'll show me you understand a purpose clause in Latin. I'll underline the subjunctive verb and append the question "What mood and why?" You answer: "Subjunctive, Purpose Clause." In the next few chapters, you'll learn that there are other clauses which take the subjunctive, and thus other answers. But for now the only possible answer for a subjunctive verb in a clause is "Purpose." If the subjunctive verb isn't in a purpose clause, as far as you know now, the only possible translation is "Let/May ..." and the one correct answer to that question "What mood and why?" is "Subjunctive, Jussive." As your study of Latin continues, you'll find there are other options here too. But enough grammar. Let's look at the vocabulary for this chapter.

The first word is *arma, armorum, n.*, meaning "arms, weapons." It's a second-declension neuter noun. It shows up in ancient texts only in the plural. No singular **armum* is attested. I guess that makes sense. After all, whoever shoots only one arrow? Which raises another point. Be careful. This is not "arms" in the sense of a body part. In Latin that "arm" is *bracchium, -ii*. This is the "arms" in "arms race." The linguistic root underlying *arma* is *ar-* which means "join" and is seen in the word "article" as in "the, a," those little words "joined" to the front of nouns. Through Greek the same root came into English in words like "arthritis" meaning "pain in one's joints" and "arthropod," originally a "joint-footed" creature. Thus, "arms" and "armor" are both things that warriors "join" onto their bodies when they're about to go out fighting.

The next word is *occasio, occasionis, f.*, meaning "occasion, opportunity," and like all *-io, -ionis* nouns in Latin, it's third-declension feminine, has an abstract sense, and it's not *i*-stem. *Occasio* is a compound of the prefix *ob-*, meaning "against," and the base *cas-*, meaning "fall." So it means literally "the act of falling against (something)." In a military context, the implication is "a sudden attack." From there the sense generalized to mean any kind of "surprise or random event," anything that unexpectedly *befell* a person. It was an easy step from there to "an opening, opportunity."

The next word is *verbum, -i, n.*, meaning "word." It's a second-declension neuter noun. What case would the Romans have used if they want to say "(expressed) in words"? The ablative, of course. The ablative is used to express means. So what would the Latin be? Good, *verbis*.

The next word is *ut*, meaning “that (as in ‘so that, in order that’), to (as in ‘in order to, so as to’).” It’s a subordinating conjunction used widely in Latin to introduce all sorts of clauses, like purpose and quite a few others we’ll study later on.

The next word, *ne*, is *ut*’s negative, meaning “that ... not (as in ‘so that ... not, in order that ... not’), not to (as in ‘in order not to, so as not to’).” “Lest,” though rather old-fashioned-sounding today, is not a bad way to translate this conjunction, assuming you know what “lest” means. For instance, “He feigned illness lest the teacher see him for the lazy lout he was.” Okay, let’s stick with “in order not to...”

The next word is a verb, *cedo, cedere, cessi, cessum*, meaning “go; withdraw, yield to, grant, submit.” It’s third-conjugation, our favorite. Its basic sense is “go,” but if it stands alone and doesn’t have a preposition or prefix telling you which way it’s going — go out, go forward, go up — to the Romans it implied “go back.” Thus, it has a secondary sense “yield” which expects an accusative direct object (to indicate the thing being yielded) and a dative indirect object (for the person it’s being yielded to). From there, *cedo* also adopted the sense “surrender, submit to, grant to.” But more often than not it’s compounded and those forms are the ones that made it into English as Latin derivatives. For instance, *procedo/processum* (“go forward”) became English “proceed, process.” *intercedo* (“go between”) turned into “intercede,” and *antecedo* (“go before”) “antecedent.” There are many more examples of this sort. *Cedite et discite, O discipuli!*

And here’s one of *cedo*’s most important compounds: *discedo, discedere, discessi, discessum*, meaning “go away, depart.” It’s third-conjugation, of course, like its parent verb. The prefix *dis-* conveys a sense of “apart, in different directions.” How would Latin say “y’all have departed”? [Which principal part will be used? The third. Drop the *-i* and you have the perfect base. So the answer is ...] *discessistis*. What about “I will depart”? [What do you mean “What about it?” Translate it! Into Latin! No, real Latin! “I-ay ill-way epart-day” is not real Latin. What conjugation is *discedo*? Third. So the future first-person singular will be ...] *discedam*. And because you’re being so good, one more: “Depart!” Plural! How does Latin say “Get out of here!” to a whole classroom full of students? [That’s the imperative mood, plural, so ...] *Discedite, O discipuli!* But not quite yet.

There’s one more verb in this chapter, and it’s a doozy: *praesto, praestare, praestiti, praestitum*, meaning “excel, exhibit, show, offer, supply, furnish.” It’s first conjugation. Literally, it’s *prae-* (“before”), plus *sto, stare* (“stand”). Please learn the underlying verb, too: *sto, stare, steti, statum*. It’s an important verb in Latin. You need to know it. And look at the perfect, *steti*. The *ste-* on the front is the remnant of reduplication. Originally, it was **stesti*, but you try saying that twenty times fast and you’ll drop the second *-s-* too. That’s a process called dissimilation, “making similar sounds unlike to ease pronunciation.” And look at the vowel in the perfect active of the compound, *praestiti* (not *-steti*). [Remember what that process is called? Of course, you don’t. You weren’t listening then either. It’s vowel gradation. Why do I even try?] *Praesto* has both an intransitive sense — it doesn’t take a direct object — meaning “to set yourself in front of others,” that is, “excel,” and it also has a transitive sense where it does expect a direct object, “to set something in front of other things,” that is, “show, furnish” it.

Last word, a word you ought to think about: *beneficium*, -ii, n., meaning “benefit, kindness, favor,” like things you do for your teacher, most of them resulting from listening and studying. It’s a second-declension neuter noun, so what will be its accusative plural ? [It’s neuter!] Yes, *beneficia*. And how would Latin say “with kindness”? [That has to be the ablative, but what kind of ablative? Ah, yes, manner. Does manner use a preposition? Yes, *cum*. So “with kindness” would be ...] *cum beneficio*. But what if we add an adjective like “great” (“with great kindness”), do you still need the preposition? No, but you can have it: *magno cum beneficio*, or *magno beneficio*.

Do the rules that were cited at the beginning of this chapter now make sense to you? If not, please review this presentation. If so, please proceed to the next slide.

For the next class meeting, please bring in a copy of the worksheet for Chapter 28. Here’s a link to that worksheet.

Aick-hay est-ay inis-fay. That’s pig-Latin Latin. Try it! I promise you. You’ll love it, and you’ll have no friends.