

A guide to subjunctives

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The subjunctive verb form is used to express a wish, a command, a suggestion or a condition that is contrary to actual fact. They are used in formal texts and are rarely found in modern English these days. We use the subjunctive when talking about events that are unlikely to happen. For example, when somebody wants the event that we are talking:

- wants to happen
- anticipates will happen
- imagines happening

Examples:

- It is important that everyone register.
- I wish, I had a million dollar.
- I suggest that he study.



Verbs that follow the subjunctives: verbs + that (subjunctive)

1. Advise, ask, command, demand, desire, insist, order, prefer, propose, recommend, request, suggest, proposal.

Adjectives that follow the subjunctives: adjective + that (subjunctive)

2. advisable, best, crucial, desirable, essential, imperative, important, necessary, unthinkable, urgent, vital

3. adamant, anxious, determined, eager, keen

A "that clause" is required for the verbs suggest/recommend/insist/demand whereas advise/ask/command/instruct/request/require/warn don't require a "that clause".

Examples:

- If I were President, I would never put up with this.
- I suggest that he implement a budget cut in February end.
- She demanded that he leave the house immediately.

In the above examples, a wish, a suggestion and a demand can be found.

We also use should and were instead of was as a subjunctive.
We use were after if, as if, suppose and wish.

Examples:

- She acts as if she were the princess.
- I wish I weren't so slow.
- Suppose Meena were here, what would you say?

However, using “was” in the sentence is acceptable, it can get a more informal tone.

Let's have a look at the Negative, Continuous and Passive Forms of Subjunctive.

Negative sentences:

For negative sentence “not” should be used after a “that clause”.

Examples:

- I suggest that you not take the job without reconfirming the salary.
- The boss insisted that Sanjana not be at the meeting.

Passive sentences:

- Doctor suggested that you be admitted to the hospital.
- Pravin recommended that Mehul be hired immediately.

Continuous sentences:

It is crucial that a car be waiting for Mr. Modi when the speech is over.
I propose that we all be waiting in Rani's apartment when she gets home.

Fixed expressions with the subjunctive

There are fixed expressions with the subjunctives and they are:

Bless you.
Long live.

Examples:

May God bless you.
Long live our little princess.

Subjunctives are not used the in modern English but having a good know how will help you in long run. Join a [spoken English course](#) and improve your English communication.

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- By Shailja Varma

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