

## Chapter 28

**RULE 1:** The subjunctive is the mood of uncertainty. It is used primarily in subordinate clauses.

**RULE 2:** The present subjunctive is formed by changing the thematic vowel (generally, from *a* to *e* or *e/i* to *a*). Remember this sentence: SHE READS A DIARY.

### I. Grammar

If the subjunctive were still fully active in English, learning Latin would much easier because we could appeal to our students' knowledge of their native tongue. Unfortunately, the English subjunctive is now largely a "schoolbook" form with little relevance to the spoken language. "If this *be* true, . . ." now sits on a dusty shelf in the Museum of Good English —*horrendum dictu!*—which means you will have to start by discussing what the subjunctive is and how it functions before you can explain the Latin forms.

#### A. The Subjunctive Mood

If anything, the subjunctive is the mood of uncertainty. It's generally applied to verbs to show potentiality, volition, exhortation, prohibition, deliberation and other situations in which the statement does not necessarily reflect established fact or recognizable certainty, according to the speaker. Because, however, the realms of fact and fiction are rarely clear-cut, there are examples of the subjunctive used in clauses which are statements of certain fact (e.g. *Cum sis mortalis*, . . .). Conversely, the indicative can represent unreal situations: "He was going to leave, except that he forgot his money". Palmer says it well: "It is . . . merely an exercise in ingenuity to attempt to establish the 'unity of the Latin subjunctive'. . ." (*The Latin Language*, 309).

#### B. The Translation of the Latin Subjunctive

Because English has no clear counterpart to the Latin mood, students will have to learn to identify the subjunctive by its form and explain that the type of clause it's in demands the subjunctive mood (purpose, result, condition, etc.). No one English word/translation (such as "might," "may," "would") can cover the Latin in any way that's even remotely comprehensive. Once students have matched the subjunctive form to its usage, they can then disregard both and translate the subjunctive as an indicative or according to the proper English expression of the particular construction. Thus, when drilling subjunctive forms, I ask students only to identify that the verb is subjunctive in form by writing an "S" next to it and tell them that they will soon learn in what situations the Latin subjunctive is used. For now, however, it is a form without context.

#### C. The Formation of the Present Subjunctive in Latin

In the present tense, a simple change of thematic vowel shifts the mood of the verb from indicative to subjunctive. Begin by reviewing the components of the present-base Latin verb and the information they carry:

PREFIX	PRESENT BASE	THEMATIC VOWEL	TENSE MARKER	PERSONAL ENDING
modifies verb action	basic meaning	mood & conjugation	tense/aspect	person/number & voice

Although there is a simple guideline for changing the present verbs of the four conjugations from indicative to subjunctive (*a > e*; *e/i > a*), a mnemonic device can be a great help to students at first. The one I was taught is: SHE READS A

**DIARY** (The vowels of the English words match the subjunctive markers of the Latin conjugations in order from first to fourth/third *-io*).

Note the first-person singular present subjunctive in third, third *-io* and fourth conjugations (e.g. *ducam*) is identical in form to the first-person singular future indicative. Context will dictate whether to interpret *ducam* as "I will lead" or "let me lead." For practice with the formation of the present subjunctive, click [here](#) for a worksheet on subjunctive forms.

## D. The Use of the Subjunctive

By the end of this class, student will have learned ten uses of the subjunctive (in order):

1. Jussive
2. Purpose Clauses
3. Result Clauses
4. Indirect Questions
5. *Cum* Clauses
6. Conditions
7. Indirect Commands (Jussive Noun Clauses)
8. Fearing Clauses
9. Relative Clauses of Characteristic and Purpose
10. Subordinate Clauses in Indirect Statement

It somehow consoles me, when embarking on a lengthy project, to know exactly how much work I will have to do. You might tell students how many subjunctive constructions they will learn in this class and reassure them that after this lesson they will have learned two out of ten (one-fifth!) of those constructions.

### 1. Jussive Subjunctive

The jussive subjunctive is different from the other subjunctive constructions students will learn in this class in that it has a corresponding verb form in English: "Let . . . !," "May . . . !" Also unlike most other subjunctive constructions, it serves as the main verb of the sentence—certain conditions also use the subjunctive as the main verb—but like several other subjunctive constructions, it is negated with *ne* (not *non*).

### 2. Purpose Clauses

One of the hardest features for native speakers of English to abandon here is the infinitive of purpose, something relatively rare in classical Latin. Moreover, the Roman use of *ut/ne* + subjunctive to express purpose, simple as it is, brings greater hardship than one might expect, especially when it has a direct counterpart in English, "so [that]."

Begin by reviewing thoroughly Wheelock's examples at the bottom of p.133. Reinforce that students should first identify the subjunctive verb by form and then determine the type of clause it's in by identifying the subordinate conjunction introducing it and the context of the sentence (so far, the only choice is a purpose clause). Then disregarding the mood of the verb they should translate the clause according to English idiom. For now, it's advisable to translate purpose clauses as "so that" since that conjunction is much closer to the Latin construction than the English infinitive of purpose. Students will, however, need to recognize English purpose-infinitives in Latin-to-English sentences (e.g. P&R #12, p.134).

## E. History of the Present Subjunctive

The formation of the subjunctive is closely tied to that of the future tense which was in some way related to the subjunctive, see [Chapter 5](#). Basically, Indo-European had several subjunctive markers, among which were *â* and *ê* (lengthened thematic vowels). In Latin these were used as both the present-tense subjunctive marker and the future marker. In conjugations where the thematic vowel was not *â* or *ê* (third, third *-io* and fourth), the *ê* became the future marker and the *â* the subjunctive marker (with *-am* in the first person singular having to do double duty, since the subjunctive *-eo* > *-ô* and the indicative *-ô* were superficially identical). In the conjugations which had *â* or *ê* as thematic

vowels (first and second), a distinctive future form had to be created, *-bi-*, modelled off the imperfect. The *â* or *é* which did not correspond to the thematic vowel was then used as the subjunctive marker.

## II. Vocabulary

- **arma:** A plural noun, with no singular in Classical Latin. Literally "fittings," *arma* comes from the base *\*ar-* "join," cf. *armus* "shoulder, joint" and its diminutive *articulus* (> English *article*), Greek *arthron* "joint." The *-m-* is a common noun-adjective suffix, cf. **almus** ("nourishing"), Greek **gnome** ("opinion").
- **occasio:** = *ob-* ("against") + *cad-* ("fall") + *-tio* ("act of"), thus literally "the act of falling against." From there it comes to mean "what one falls into or encounters, opportunity." In military contexts, it betokens "surprise, raid."
- **verbum:** The Latin word is less restricted in meaning than English *word*. *Verbum* encompasses "expression, proverb, prattle, formula." Cognate with Greek *ereo* (< (*w*)*ereo*, with expected loss of digamma) and English *word*, it came to have its grammatical sense "verb" when Roman grammarians adopted Greek nomenclature and equated *verbum* with Greek *rema*.
- **ut:** Originally meaning "in some way," *ut* regularly accompanied jussive subjunctives. The particle became a habitual constituent of the construction, lost its full original meaning and was later associated with the subjunctive in general. Once it was felt to "govern" this mood, it became associated with subjunctive constructions of all sorts. [*Ut* may have started as *\*qwut-* which lost its initial consonant possibly as part of a general trend to analyse forms like *ne-cubi* as *nec-ubi*. Initial *qw-* is also lost in other words, e.g. *vapor* (< *\*kwapos*, cf. Greek *kapnos* with loss of digamma).]
- **ne:** This word is the basic form of the negator in Latin—*non* = *ne* + *oinum* (archaic *unum*), cf. English *not* < *nought* < Old English *nowiht* ("nothing")—*nê* represents the long form of the Indo-European negative adverb. *Nec* represents the short form, as does the prefix *in-* (< *\*n*, the weak grade of the negator) and English *un-*.
- **cedo:** In many cases this word means little more than "go." As a base verb, it has many important compounds (see *discedo* in this chapter's vocabulary). Note that simple *cedo* (i.e. unprefixated) takes a dative (indirect) object, rendering the sense "yield to, submit to." The perfect *cess-* = *ced-* + *-s-* (past marker, cf. Greek sigmatic aorists).
- **discedo:** Students should understand that *dis-* means "apart, separately," cf. *dispel*, *disperse*, *dissuade*, (and with assimilation) *divide*, *differ*.
- **praesto:** Teach (or remind) students that they should learn *sto stare steti statum* along with *praesto*, its compound. [The perfect reduplication could easily have produced *\*sesti* (cf. *sisto*) instead of *steti*. The loss of *s* in the base is explicable by "dissimilation," the process by which two similar sounds in proximity which are difficult to pronounce in rapid succession are differentiated by changing one to a related sound, cf. *\*caeluleus* "sky-blue" > *caeruleus*, *\*can-men* > *carmen*, *\*medi-die* > *meridie* and the formation of the suffix *-aris* from *-alis* when attached to words containing *-t-*, e.g. *\*consulalis* > *consularis*, *\*lunalis* > *lunaris*. In the case of *steti* (< *\*stesti*), the second *-st-* is dissimilated to *-t-*, cf. *spopondi*.]