

# THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD:

## I. CONCEPT OF THE SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

“Mood” (Lat. **modus**) is the “manner” of expressing an action or state of being. We have already encountered verbs in two of the three Latin moods, the **INDICATIVE** and the **IMPERATIVE**. An imperative (from **imperāre**, *to command*) emphatically **commands** someone to undertake an action that is not yet going on, while an indicative (from **indicāre**, *to point out*) **indicates** real actions, i.e., actions that have (or have not) definitely occurred in the past, that definitely are (or are not) occurring in the present, or that very likely will (or will not) occur in the future.

In contrast to the indicative, the mood of actuality and factuality, the **SUBJUNCTIVE** is in general the mood of potential, hypothetical, ideal, or even unreal action. An example in English is, “If that student were here, he would be taking notes”; in this sentence, which imagines actions contrary to the actual fact, English employs the auxiliaries “were” and “would” to indicate the action described is hypothetical. Other auxiliaries used in English to describe potential or ideal actions are “may,” “might,” “should,” “would,” “may have,” “would have,” etc.

Latin employs the subjunctive much more frequently than English, in a wide variety of clause types, and it uses special subjunctive verb forms rather than auxiliaries. There are two tasks involved in mastering the subjunctive: first, learning the new forms, which is a relatively simple matter; second, learning to recognize and translate the various subjunctive clause types, which is also quite easily done, if your approach is systematic.

## II. SUBJUNCTIVE TENSES

There are only four tenses in the subjunctive mood. The present subjunctive is introduced in Ch. 28 and has rules for formation that vary slightly for each of the four conjugations; rules for forming the imperfect (Ch. 29), perfect, and pluperfect (Ch. 30) are the same for all four conjugations.

**PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE:** resembles present indicative, but with the vowel changes signaled in the mnemonic WE FEAR A LIAR and the personal endings **-m**, **-s**, **-t**, etc.; sometimes translated with the auxiliary “may.”

## III. SUBJUNCTIVE CLAUSE TYPES

In Wheelock you are introduced to a series of subjunctive clause types, including jussive and purpose clauses in Ch. 28; for each you must learn: (1) its **DEFINITION**, (2) how to **RECOGNIZE** it in a Latin sentence, and (3) how to **TRANSLATE** it into English.

### 1. JUSSIVE SUBJUNCTIVES

**DEFINITION:** an independent (main) clause expressing a command or exhortation (the only use of the subjunctive in a main clause formally introduced in Wheelock). E.g., “Let us study this lesson carefully.”

**RECOGNITION:** easily recognized, since the sentence’s main verb (and often its only verb) is subjunctive; negatives are introduced by **nē**.

**TRANSLATION:** *let* (sometimes *may* or *should*) is the English auxiliary used in translation, followed by the subject noun or pronoun (in the objective case, i.e., *me*, *us*, *him*, *her*, *it*, *them*). E.g.:



“And remember—no more subjunctives where the correct mood is indicative.”

**Cōgitem nunc dē hāc rē, et tum nōn errābō.**

*Let me think about this matter now, and then I will not make a mistake.*

**Discipulus discat aut discēdat.**

*Let the student learn or leave.*

**Discāmus magnā cum dēlectātiōne linguam Latīnam.**

*Let us learn the Latin language with great delight.*

**Nē id faciāmus.**

*Let us (let's) not do this.*

## 2. PURPOSE CLAUSES

**DEFINITION:** a subordinate clause explaining the purpose of the action in the main clause, i.e., answering the question “why?” E.g., “we study Latin *so that we may learn more about ancient Rome*” or “we study Latin *to improve our English*.”

**RECOGNITION:** introduced by **ut** if purpose is stated positively, by **nē** if negative, with a subjunctive verb at the end, and answering the question “why?”

**TRANSLATION:** there are often several options, including translating **ut** + the subjunctive together as an infinitive; other more formal options include using the auxiliary “may” for the present subjunctive and “might” for the imperfect. E.g.:

**Hic dīcit ut eōs iuuet.**

*He says this to help (in order to help) them. (more colloquial)*

*He says this so that (in order that) he may help them. (more formal)*

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### PRACTICE!!

Transform from indicative to subjunctive:

amat: \_\_\_\_\_ dēbēmus: \_\_\_\_\_ dūcis: \_\_\_\_\_ faciunt: \_\_\_\_\_ sciō: \_\_\_\_\_

Identify the subjunctive clause type AND translate:

Latīnam semper amēmus! CLAUSE TYPE (purpose or jussive): \_\_\_\_\_

TRANSLATION: \_\_\_\_\_

Latīnam discimus ut Rōmānōs bene intellegāmus. CLAUSE TYPE (purpose or jussive): \_\_\_\_\_

TRANSLATION: \_\_\_\_\_

Amīcōs tuōs laudās nē discēdant. CLAUSE TYPE (purpose or jussive): \_\_\_\_\_

TRANSLATION: \_\_\_\_\_

Nē amīcī nostrī discēdant! CLAUSE TYPE (purpose or jussive): \_\_\_\_\_

TRANSLATION: \_\_\_\_\_