



# Spanish subjunctive

JAN HEPWORTH

AUCKLAND GRAMMAR SCHOOL

The use of the subjunctive at first appears to be very difficult. However, the types of verbs that take the subjunctive are ones that express the following: desire, sentiment, volition, cause, demand, request, doubt, necessity etc.

If there is a possibility that the action about which you are speaking has not or may not take place, then the subjunctive is used. For example:

*Colin went to the shop* – NOT subjunctive

*Colin is going to the shop* – NOT subjunctive

*I want Colin to go to the shop* – subjunctive

*It is necessary for Colin to go to the shop* – subjunctive

*I tell Colin to go to the shop* – subjunctive

*I hope Colin goes to the shop* – subjunctive

*I would prefer for Colin to go to the shop* – subjunctive

All the above examples use the subjunctive because there is no guarantee that Colin will do as he is told!

The subjunctive is used in clauses after verbs which indicate subjective idea or opinion. For example:

querer (*to want*)

esperar (*to hope*)

estar contento (*to be happy*)

sentir (*to regret*)

preferir (*to prefer*)

temer (*to fear*)

tener miedo de (*to be afraid*)

mandar (*to order*)

insistir (*to insist*)

prohibir (*to prohibit*)

It is also used after impersonal expressions that have an element of subjunctivity;

es necesario que (*it's necessary*)

es imposible que (*it is impossible*)

es bueno que (*it is good*)

es mejor que (*it is better*)

es importante que (*it is important*)

es posible que (*it's possible*)

es probable que (*it is probable*)

es malo que (*it is bad*)

es raro que (*it is unusual*)

es aconsejable que (*it is advisable*)

The third use of the subjunctive is with expressions of doubt;

no creer (*not to believe*)

es dudoso (*it is doubtful*)

es incierto (*it is uncertain*)

dudar (*to doubt*)

no estar seguro (*not to be sure*)

no es cierto (*it is not certain*)

The final use of the subjunctive (for today!) is with certain verbs which imply a command or an order but it is not definite that the order will be carried out.

decir (*to tell*)

pedir (*to ask*)

exigir (*to demand*)

recomendar (*to recommend*)

escribir (*to write*)

mandar (*to order*)

aconsejar (*to advise*)

## PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE

To form the present tense subjunctive the first person of present tense (indicative) is used.

- drop the final -o
- reverse the normal endings

For example:

HABLAR: hable, hables, hable, hablemos, habléis, hablen

COMER: coma, comas, coma, comamos, comáis, coman

VIVIR: viva, vivas, viva, vivamos, viváis, vivan

The verbs *dar, ir, ser, estar, saber* are irregular in the present subjunctive

## IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE

The imperfect subjunctive is used in cases where the verb of the main clause is in the past or the conditional tenses.

MAIN CLAUSE	DEPENDENT CLAUSE
PRESENT	PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE
FUTURE	PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE
IMPERFECT	IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE
PRETERITE	IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE
CONDITIONAL	IMPERFECT SUBJUNCTIVE

The imperfect subjunctive is formed by

- find the third person plural of the preterite tense
- remove the “-RON”
- add the following endings

-AR	-ER	-IR
-ara OR -ase	-iera OR -iese	-iera OR -iese
-aras OR -ases	-ieras OR -ieses	-ieras OR -ieses
-ara OR -ase	-iera OR -iese	-iera OR -iese
-áramos OR -ásemos	-iéramos OR -iésemos	-iéramos OR -iésemos
-arais OR -aseis	-ierais OR -ieseis	-ierais OR -ieseis
-aran OR -asen	-ieran OR -iesen	-ieran OR -iesen

The subjunctive is used with conjunctions of time:

cuando (*when*)

en cuanto (*as soon as*)

tan pronto como (*as soon as*)

hasta que (*until*)

después de que (*after*)

For example:

*Yo le hablaré en cuanto venga*