

Have Fun Learning the Present Subjunctive in Spanish



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Levels 2, 3, 4, 5

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Note: The previous title of this book was **A New Way to Learn the Present Subjunctive**.

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Some thoughts on the present subjunctive

Have Fun Learning the Present Subjunctive in Spanish

Those of us who first learned Spanish in classrooms are most certainly familiar with the term “subjunctive mood.” Truth to tell, it struck lightning bolts of fear into the very core of our unprotected little hearts. But since leaving the classroom and learning to USE Spanish, we have come to see that “subjunctive mood “ becomes better understood and less feared with analysis. Let us demonstrate.

Subjunctive is an adjective that shares roots with a verb, TO SUBJOIN. A dictionary will explain that the verb means to attach something to the end of a segment of writing. That makes etymological sense. If you add something to the bottom of a segment, you are hanging something that is dependent on the original segment to get its meaning. Take the word apart and you can see that. Sub means “under” and “join” means to attach. That is what happens when you attach something to the end of a segment (clause). That something gets its meaning from the clause to which it is attached.

Mood is another frightening term. The adolescent mind may see it in terms of “Oh. Oh, Dad’s in a bad mood.” Since the word as used in grammar has nothing to do with “Dad” and his moods, our best guess is that over the years, the word mood somehow replaced mode. Lights are on when the switch is in the ON mode. Mood, we submit, is really mode.

So, we can change the meaning of a sentence by alternating its mode switch. The switch we speak of is a verb form.

Look at these two sentences.

1. *Mamá **sabe** que Pepe toma la medicina.* The “switch” is the verb form “**sabe**” and it dictates that the meaning is not subject to any change of meaning. It is a simple statement of fact. Mother **knows** that Joe TAKES his medicine.
2. *Mamá **quiere** que Pepe tome la medicina.* The “switch” is the verb form “**quiere**” which is now in position to say that the two actions in the sentence DEPEND on one another. The verb “**quiere**” is not a mere statement of fact. It says that mother **wants** that Joe TAKE his medicine. He **may or may not** take the medicine.

You won’t be surprised to hear that Spanish evolved without asking English speakers to define it. However, that is a possible reason that no matter how much work we may dedicate to English descriptions of when we should turn the “switch” one way or the other, we find that our “rules” get violated by one real and acceptable use of Spanish in the everyday world. Still, we have established a set of what we will call triggers. These triggers are contained in our *Hoja de reglas/Presente del subjuntivo*. If your students become familiar with them and let their use in set contexts become habit, they will be using Spanish correctly **many, many more times** than not.

For the Teacher

Have Fun Learning the Present Subjunctive in Spanish

Overview

Welcome to the world of the present tense subjunctive! Students use labels from products sold in Mexico, Argentina and Spain as they do vocabulary exercises and read a televisión commercial for a real product. In that commercial, students analyze the subjunctive used in each sentence of the commercial. They apply rules for the subjunctive using their Hoja de reglas/Presente del subjuntivo. There are nineteen fun chapters to use for present tense subjunctive practice. Each chapter includes an *Antes de leer*, *Vamos a leer*, and a *Después de leer* section. Students act out a TV commercial in the *Teatro* section using the subjunctive.

How To

1. Handout a copy of Hoja de reglas / Presente del subjuntivo. Review the reglas with the class.
2. Select a chapter. Copy and handout the three pages for the chapter. You can give a separate chapter to each pair of students or do the same chapter with the entire class. Have students work in pairs.
3. If you have the digital file of the book, let students use their iPads, Tablets, or project the pages onto a Smartboard.
4. Follow the instructions on each page to do the work with the entire class. Have students pronounce the name of the product in Spanish!
5. In the Teatro and Fantasía sections encourage the students to give a silly name to the TV announcer in the commercials. (Examples: el Tigre Toño, Tony the Tiger for Kellogg's, Clara Luz Cabello for Clairol, Carlos Cafecito for Nescafé, Miguel Matamosquitos for Raid, etc.) We do not include silly names since we are leaving that creative touch up to your students! Do videoclips on a Smartphone of the student commercials.
6. Collect the pages. Award points for the work: 22-25 points-outstanding, 19-22 very good, 14-18 good, 11-13 weak, below 11-needs help
7. Have a Presente del subjuntivo project week. Do a chapter each day. Allow students to do posters and PowerPoints on the present tense subjunctive using material learned in each chapter.

Time

Spend forty to fifty-five minutes on the chapter.



Hoja de reglas / Presente del subjuntivo

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1. **Action not completed:** Use the subjunctive when an action has yet to be completed after *hasta que*, *cuando*, *en cuanto* (*tan pronto como*). *Lláname cuando vuelvas*. Call me when you return-you have not returned yet. *Estudiará hasta que mi padre lo llame*. He will study until my father calls him. *En cuanto trabajes, ganarás dinero*. As soon as you work, you will earn money.
2. **Commands:** The command form of verbs/the formal command (*Ud.*) is in the present tense of the subjunctive. *Hable Ud. con ella*. Speak with her.
3. **Demand or request:** *Le pido a Ud. que me dé dinero para los pobres*. I ask you to give me money for the poor. *Le exigo que él me llame mañana*. I demand that he call me tomorrow.
4. **Suggestion or recommendation:** *Le sugiero a Ud. que marque 911*. I suggest that you dial 911. *Te recomiendo que estudies*. I recommend that you study.
5. **Wanting:** *Pepito quiere que su mamá le dé helado*. Joey wants his Mom to give him ice cream.
6. **Permission:** *La mamá de Pepito le permite que vaya al cine*. Joey's Mom permits him to go to the movies. *Deja que tu hijo aprenda bien el español*. Let (allow) your son learn Spanish well.
7. **Prohibition:** *La ley prohíbe que estacionen allí*. The law prohibits that they park there.
8. **Preference:** *Prefiero que comamos espinacas*. I prefer that we eat spinach.
9. **Expressing a feeling** (any kind): *Temo que el lobo devore a Caperucita Roja*. I am afraid the wolf will devour Little Red riding Hood. *Espero que estés contento*. I hope you are happy. *Siento que Diego no nos escuche*. I regret that James does not listen to us. *Me sorprende que Julia no trabaje*. It surprises me that Julia does not work.
10. **Impersonal verbs** ("it" is the subject): *Es importante (es posible, es imposible, es una lástima, es probable, es necesario) que llegues a tiempo*. It is important (possible, impossible, a shame, probable, necessary) that you arrive on time.
11. **Doubt, denial or disbelief:** *Dudo (no creo) que Juan coma tacos*. I doubt (do not believe) that Juan eats tacos. *Niego que ella baile con Justin Timberlake*. I deny she dances with Justin Timberlake.
12. **To specify indefinite characteristics (after que, etc.):** *Busco una guitarra que sea económica*. I am looking for an inexpensive guitar.
13. **To include any and all:** *Sea quien sea...* Whoever it may be..., *Dondequiera que sea...* Wherever he may be...
14. **No matter how much:** *Por mucho que llueva, no habrá inundación*. No matter how much it rains, there will not be a flood.
15. **Nothing (none/no) who is like ...** *No hay ningún atleta que sea como él*. There is no athlete who is like him.
16. **Indicating purpose:** *Lo hago para que aprendas*. I am doing it so that (in order that) you will learn.
17. **Idea beginning with *sin que*-without, *a menos que*-unless, *antes de que*-before and *con tal que*-provided that:** *No puedes subir al autobús sin que le pagues al chofer*. You can't get on the bus without paying the driver.
18. **Main idea unspoken using *que* an indirect command:** *Que sea ésta la última vez*. Let this be the last time. *Que cante Elena*. Let Elaine sing.

Some of the above rules are mentioned in **Ramsey, Marathon Montrose, A Textbook of Modern Spanish as Now Written and Spoken in Castile and the Spanish American Republics**. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1894 (revised 1956 by Robert K. Spaulding).