

The Present Subjunctive

The present subjunctive is a mood in the present tense, widely used in Spanish but rarely used in English. So far you have studied the present tense in the indicative mood, the most frequently used mood in the language. This chapter introduces the present subjunctive. It is important to learn it now so that you can express yourself confidently and freely in the present tense.

The present subjunctive cannot exist alone. Another element in the sentence always causes it to be used. The subjunctive is often needed after the following elements.

- Certain impersonal expressions
- Certain verbs
- Certain conjunctions
- Certain dependent adjective clauses
- Certain expressions

Formation of the Present Subjunctive

- Almost all verbs form the present subjunctive from the first-person singular **yo** form of the present indicative. Drop the **-o** to get the stem for the present subjunctive.
- Verbs that are irregular in the present indicative are irregular in the present subjunctive in the same way.
- There are only six verbs that do not form the present subjunctive from the **yo** form of the present indicative.

-Ar Verbs

In order to conjugate both regular and irregular **-ar** verbs in the present subjunctive, you start with the **yo** form of the present indicative. Drop the **-o** and add **-e, -es, -e, -emos, -éis, -en** to the stem.

Infinitive	yo Form	Present Subjunctive	
cantar	canto	yo cante tú cantes él cante	nosotros cantemos vosotros cantéis ellos canten
bailar	bailo	yo baile tú bailes ella baile	nosotros bailemos vosotros bailéis ellas bailen
cerrar	cierro	yo cierre tú cierres Ud. cierre	nosotros cerremos vosotros cerréis Uds. cierren
pensar	pienso	yo piense tú pienses ella piense	nosotros pensemos vosotros penséis ellas piensen
recordar	recuerdo	yo recuerde tú recuerdes él recuerde	nosotros recordemos vosotros recordéis ellos recuerden

Note that the first-person singular and the third-personal singular are identical in the present subjunctive.

The first two examples, **cantar** and **bailar**, are regular. The last three, **cerrar**, **pensar**, and **recordar**, are irregular in the present indicative. Note that their stem changes in the present indicative are also present in the present subjunctive, except in the **nosotros** and **vosotros** forms, which are unaffected by stem changes.

**A Word About the Present Subjunctive**

The formation of the subjunctive comes from the conjugation of the *first-person singular* of the present indicative. Any irregularity that the verb has in the present indicative **yo** form also occurs in the present subjunctive. To learn the subjunctive well, practice the **yo** form of the verbs, because that will be the stem of the present subjunctive.

-Er and -ir Verbs

In order to conjugate both regular and irregular **-er** and **-ir** verbs in the present subjunctive, you drop the **-o** from the first-person singular of the present indicative and add **-a, -as, -a, -amos, -áis, -an** to the stem.

-Er Verbs

Infinitive	yo Form	Present Subjunctive	
comer	como	yo coma tú comas él coma	nosotros comamos vosotros comáis ellos coman
querer	quiero	yo quiera tú quieras ella quiera	nosotros queramos vosotros queráis ellas quieran
poder	puedo	yo pueda tú puedas Ud. pueda	nosotros podamos vosotros podáis Uds. puedan
ver	veo	yo vea tú veas él vea	nosotros veamos vosotros veáis ellos vean

-Ir Verbs

Infinitive	yo Form	Present Subjunctive	
vivir	vivo	yo viva tú vivas él viva	nosotros vivamos vosotros viváis ellos vivan
mentir	miento	yo mienta tú mientas ella mienta	nosotros mintamos vosotros mintáis ellas mientan
pedir	pido	yo pida tú pidas Ud. pida	nosotros pidamos vosotros pidáis Uds. pidan
dormir	duermo	yo duerma tú duermas él duerma	nosotros durmamos vosotros durmáis ellos duerman

NOTE: In the irregular **-ir** verbs, there is an additional irregularity in the **nosotros** and **vosotros** forms. The stem change **e > ie** or **e > i** has an **-i-** in the **nosotros** and **vosotros** forms. The stem change **o > ue** has a **-u-** in the **nosotros** and **vosotros** forms.

-Er and -ir Verbs with -g- or -zc- in the yo Form

In the present subjunctive, certain **-er** and **-ir** verbs carry the irregularity of the first-person singular throughout the conjugation. There are no **-ar** verbs that have this irregularity.

Infinitive	yo Form	Present Subjunctive	
conocer	conozco	yo conozca tú conozcas él conozca	nosotros conozcamos vosotros conozcáis ellos conozcan
decir	digo	yo diga tú digas ella diga	nosotros digamos vosotros digáis ellas digan
hacer	hago	yo haga tú hagas Ud. haga	nosotros hagamos vosotros hagáis Uds. hagan
poner	pongo	yo ponga tú pongas él ponga	nosotros pongamos vosotros pongáis ellos pongan
salir	salgo	yo salga tú salgas ella salga	nosotros salgamos vosotros salgáis ellas salgan
tener	tengo	yo tenga tú tengas Ud. tenga	nosotros tengamos vosotros tengáis Uds. tengan
traer	traigo	yo traiga tú traigas él traiga	nosotros traigamos vosotros traigáis ellos traigan
venir	vengo	yo venga tú vengas ella venga	nosotros vengamos vosotros vengáis ellas vengán

Irregular Verbs

There are only six verbs that have a present subjunctive that is not formed from the first-person singular. They are irregular in that they cannot be formed from the **yo** form.

Infinitive	yo Form	Present Subjunctive	
dar	doy	yo dé tú des él dé	nosotros demos vosotros deis ellos den
estar	estoy	yo esté tú estés ella esté	nosotros estemos vosotros estéis ellas estén
ir	voy	yo vaya tú vayas Ud. vaya	nosotros vayamos vosotros vayáis Uds. vayan
saber	sé	yo sepa tú sepas él sepa	nosotros sepamos vosotros sepáis ellos sepan
ser	soy	yo sea tú seas ella sea	nosotros seamos vosotros seáis ellas sean
haber	he	yo haya tú hayas Ud. haya	nosotros hayamos vosotros hayáis Uds. hayan

NOTES: **Dé** (the form for both the first- and third-person singular of **dar**) has a written accent to distinguish it from **de** (*of*).

The word **hay** comes from the infinitive **haber**. You will not need this form for any other use at this time.

Verbs with Orthographic Changes

Verbs with orthographic changes are not irregular. The spelling changes simply maintain the sound of the **yo** form. Some of the most common spelling changes are the following.

- Verbs that end in **-gar** change **g** to **gu**.
- Verbs that end in **-car** change **c** to **qu**.
- Verbs that end in **-zar** change **z** to **c**.

Infinitive	yo Form	Present Subjunctive	
apagar	apago	yo apague tú apagues él apague	nosotros apaguemos vosotros apaguéis ellos apaguen
buscar	busco	yo busque tú busques Ud. busque	nosotros busquemos vosotros busquéis Uds. busquen
comenzar	comienzo	yo comience tú comiences ella comience	nosotros comencemos vosotros comencéis ellas comiencen
empezar	empiezo	yo empiece tú empieces él empiece	nosotros empecemos vosotros empecéis ellos empiecen
explicar	explico	yo explique tú expliques Ud. explique	nosotros expliquemos vosotros expliquéis Uds. expliquen
llegar	llego	yo llegue tú llegues ella llegue	nosotros lleguemos vosotros lleguéis ellas lleguen
tocar	toco	yo toque tú toques Ud. toque	nosotros toquemos vosotros toquéis Uds. toquen

NOTE: The change **z** > **c** occurs before the vowel **e** without affecting the sound. The consonants **c** (before **i** and **e**), **s**, and **z** all have the same sound.



A Word About Pronunciation of the Present Subjunctive

Like the present indicative, the stress in the present subjunctive tense is on the second to last syllable. As you practice, make sure you pronounce the verbs in this way: **yo cante**, **tú cantes**, **él cante**, **nosotros cantemos**, **ellos canten**. If a word carries an accent mark, stress the accented syllable: **vosotros cantéis**.