

Uses of the subjunctive

The subjunctive is used in several constructions, and its translation depends on the construction. Below are the most frequent.

Independent uses

i.1 Deliberative

The subjunctive may be used in a question, indicating the speaker wonders what to do. Translation is usually “should I...”

fugiāmus an resistāmus? *Sh uld we flee r sh uld we resist?*

quid faciam? *What sh uld I d ?*

dīcam an taceam? *Sh uld I speak r keep quiet?*

quōmodō nōs dēfendāmus? *H wsh uld we defend urselves?*

i.2 Optative

The subjunctive, usually introduced by **utinam**, may be used as the main verb to express a wish. Translation is “would that...” or “I wish that...”

utinam nē capiātur! *I h pe he isn't captured!*

utinam resistere potuissem! *I wish I'd been able t resist!*

utinam ēbrius essem! *W uld that I were int xicated!*

i.3 Jussive

The subjunctive as the main verb may express a command, especially for the 1st or 3rd person. Translation is “let us/him...”

dīligerent labōrent. *Let them w rk m re carefully.*

vīvāmus atque amēmus. *Let us live and l ve.*

lūdōs spectēmus! *Let's watch the games!*

Subordinate uses

Sequence of tenses

In subordinate clauses the tense of the subjunctive verb is relative to and dependent on the tense in the main clause.

After the **primary** tenses (present, future, sometimes perfect):

present subjunctive = same time

perfect subjunctive = past

After the **historical** tenses (imperfect, perfect, pluperfect):

imperfect subjunctive = same time

pluperfect subjunctive = past

ii.1 Purpose clauses

ut + subjunctive may introduce a subordinate clause which gives the purpose of the action in the main clause. Translation is “to...” or “in order to...”

imperātor adest ut fābulam spectet. *The emperor is here to see the show.*

militēs ēmītti sunt ut turbam dēpellerent. *The soldiers were sent to repel the crowd.*

arbōrem ascendit nē caperētur. *He climbed the tree so that he wouldn't be caught.*

ii.2. Result clauses

ut + subjunctive may give the natural consequences or results of the action in the main clause. These are often marked with **tam**, **sic**, **tantus**, **ita**, etc. Translation is “so... that...”

tam sapiēns est ut ab omnibus laudētur. *He's so smart that he's praised by all.*

tam pinguis erat ut nōn ambulāre posset. *He was so fat that he couldn't walk.*

tantus clāmor erat ut nēmō audīret. *There was such noise that no one could hear.*

ii.3 Cum-clauses

cum + subjunctive may be used in a subordinate clause to give the circumstances of the action of the main clause. (Note that **cum** + indicative means precise time when.) Translation is “when,” “since,” or “although,” depending on context.

cum hoc fēcisset, ad tē fūgit. *When he'd done this, he fled to you.*

cum hoc ageret, potuit eōs iuvāre. *Since he'd done this, he could help them.*

cum hoc scīret, tamen militēs mīsit. *Although he knew this, he still sent the troops.*

ii.4 Noun clauses

The following constructions are frequently used as the direct object or as the subject of a main clause (i.e., they are sentences acting as nouns).

ii.4.a Indirect question

An interrogative word (**quis**, **cūr**, **quōmodō**, etc.) followed by the subjunctive signals an indirect question.

rogant ubi dux sit. *They're asking where the leader is.*

mihi dixerat cūr mīles hoc fēcisset. *He'd told me why the soldier did this.*

nescīvit ubi pecūnia pōsita esset. *He didn't know where the money had been put.*

ii.4.b Indirect command

A main verb of commanding, advising, asking, etc., followed by **ut** + subjunctive reports an indirect command.

imperat vōbīs ut hoc faciātis. *He's giving an order that you do this.*

petīvit ab eīs nē hoc facerent. *He asked if they wouldn't do this.*

monuit eās ut hoc facerent. *He advised them to do this.*

ii.4.c Fear clauses

A main verb of fearing, risking, endangering, etc., followed by **nē** + subjunctive gives the object of the fear. (Note that **nē** is positive, **ut** is negative).

timeō nē id crēdant. *I'm afraid that they believe it.*

metuistī ut mulierēs tē vīdissent. *You feared that the women hadn't seen you.*

horreō nē omnēs virī malī sint. *I'm scared that all the men are bad.*

ii.5 Conditions

There are three types of conditions (particular, general, and potential) in three tenses (past, present, and future). Latin does not distinguish explicitly between particular and general conditions, which both use the indicative. Potential conditions take the subjunctive.

Particular (or General)

Past **sī id fēcit, prūdēns fuit.** *If he did it, he was smart.*

Present **sī id facit, prūdēns est.** *If he is doing it, he's smart. (r: If he does it, he's smart.)*

Future **sī id faciet, prūdēns erit.** *If he will do it, he'll be smart.*

Potential

Past **sī id fēcisset, prūdēns fuisset.** *If he had done it, he would have been smart.*

Present **sī id faceret, prūdēns esset.** *If he were doing it, he would be smart.*

Future **sī id faciat, prūdēns sit.** *If he should do it, he would be smart.*

ii.5.b Proviso

dum or **dummodo** + subjunctive signals a proviso clause. Translation is “as long as...,” “provided that...,” or “if only...”

nōn timēbō, dummodo hīc remaneās. *I won't be afraid, as long as you stay here.*

erimus fēlīcēs, dummodo discēdās. *We'll be happy, as long as you leave.*

illum neglegō, dummodo mūrus intersit. *I ignore him, as long as a wall lies between us.*

Now practice:

1. imperium dūcī potentiorī dabunt ut hostēs acerrimōs āvertat.
2. auctor sapiēns et diligēns turpia vītet et bona probet.
3. illī adulēscētēs sapientiae dēnique cēdant ut fēliciōrēs hīs sint.
4. cum parentēs essent vīvī, fēlīcēs erant; mortuī quoque sunt beātī.
5. potestne haec lux esse tibi iucunda, cum sciās hōs omnēs cōnsilia tua cognōvisse?
6. cum rēs pūblica immortālis esse dēbeat, doleo eam salūtis ēgere ac in vīta unīus mortālis consistere.
7. nunc ūna rēs mihi protinus est facienda ut maximam ôtium et solācium habeam.
8. nēmō quidem tam ferōx est ut nōn mollīrī possit, cultūrā datā.
9. difficile est satūram nōn scribere; nam quis est tam patiēns malae urbis ut sē teneat?
10. ratiō ducat, nōn fortūna.
11. sī custōdiae dūriōrēs fortiōrēsque ad cāsam tuam contendissent, heu, numquam tanta scelera suscēpissēs et hī omnēs nōn occidissent.
12. cum illa fēmina sapientissima id semel cognōvisset, ad eōs celerrimē sē contulit et omnēs opēs suās praebuit.
13. sī quid dē mē posse agī putābis, id agēs—sī tū ipse ab istō perīculō eris liber.
14. sī essem mihi cōncius ūlliūs culpae, aequō animō hoc malum ferrem.
15. dīcis tē vērē mālle fortūnam et mōrēs antiquae plēbis; sed sī quis ad illa subitō tē agat, illum modum vītiae recusēs.
16. minus saepe errēs, sī sciās quid nesciās.
17. petēbant a nōbīs ut etiam in adversīs rēbus huic duci pārērēmus et servīrēmus.
18. sī quis rogābit quid nunc discās, refer tē artem nōn mediocrem sed ūtilissimam ac diffīclimam discere.
19. lēgēs ita scribāntur ut dīvitēs et plebs—etiam pauper sine asse—sint pārēs.
20. dummodo sīs aequus hīs virīs, fient tibi fidēlēs.
21. pater, ōrō tē ut mihi ignōscās.
22. itaque prō patriā etiam maiōra meliōraque nunc faciāmus.
23. nepos tuus ā mensā discēdat nē ista verba acerba audiat.

24. fēminaē ad lūdōs semper veniunt ut videant—et ut ipsae videantur.
25. prīnceps arma meliōra in manibus mīlitum posuit, ut hostēs terrerent.
26. pars mīlitum lūcem dieī vītāvit nē hīc viderentur.
27. poterāsne etiam centum virīs persuādere ut viam virtūtis sine praemiīs sequerentur?
28. arma togae cēdant.
29. ex urbe nunc discēde nē metū et armīs opprimar.
30. quīdam magister verba tam dura discipulīs dīxit ut discēderent.
31. nihil vērō tam facile est ut sine labōre id facere possīmus.
32. omnia vincit Amor; et nōs cēdāmus Amōrī.
33. ita dūrus erās ut neque amōre neque precibus mollīrī possēs.
34. parēns ipse nec habeat vītia nec toleret.
35. fuit quondam in hāc rē pūblicā tanta virtūs ut virī fortēs cīvem perniciōsum acriōribus poenīs quam acerbissimum hostem reprimerent.
36. nē ratiōnēs meōrum periculōrum ūtilitātem reī pūblicae vincant.
37. ḍrātor exemplum dignum petat ab Dēmosthenē illō, in quō tantum studium tantusque labor fuisse dīcuntur ut impedimenta nātūrae dīlgentiā industriāque superāret.
38. rōgāvit ubi illae duae discipulae dignae haec didicissent.
39. vidēbit quanta fuerit vīs illōrum verbōrum fēlicium.
40. hās īsidiās repente exposuit nē rēs pūblica opprimerētur.
41. hī taceant et trēs cēterī expellantur nē occāsiōnem similem habeant.
42. ita dūrus erat ut beneficia uxōris comprehendere nōn posset.
43. at volumus cognōscere cūr sīc inviderint et cūr verba eius tam dūra fuerint.
44. cum cēterī hās īsidiās cognōverint, vult in exsilium fūrtim ac quam celerrimē sē cōferre ut rūmōrēs et invidiam vītet.
45. multīne discipulī tantum studium usque praestant ut hās sententiās facillimē ūnō annō legere possint?
46. cum dīvitiās āmisisset et ūnum asse nōn habēret, tamen omnēs cīvēs ingenium mōrēsque eius maximē laudābant.

47. dummodo exercitus opem mox ferat, moenia urbis celeriter cōservāre poterimus.

48. rogābat cūr cēterae tantam fidem apud nōs praestārent et nōbīs tantam spem adferrent.

49. cum patria nostra tanta beneficia offerat, quidam tamen sē in īnsidiās fūrtim cōferunt et contra bonōs mox pugnābunt.

50. dēnique audiāmus quantae sint hae insidiaē ac quot coniūrātī contrā cīvitātem surgant.

51. dē mortuīs nihil nisi bonum dīcāmus.

52. rapiāmus, amīcī, occāsiōnem dē diē.

53. quī beneficium dedit, taceat; nārret quī accēpit.

54. cum illum hominem esse servum nōvisset, eum comprehendere nōn dūbitāvit.

55. cēterī quidem nesciēbant quam acris esset mēns nātae eōrum.

56. iam cōgnōvī cūr clāra facta vērō nōn sint facillima.

57. quam dulcis sit libertās vōbīs protinus dīcam.

58. rōgābat dēnique cūr umquam ex urbe cēdissent.

59. nunc sciō quid sit amor.

60. videāmus uter hīc in mediō forō plūs scribēre possit.

61. multī dūbitābant quid optimum esset.

62. sed tempus est iam mē discēdere ut cicūtam bībam, et vōs discēdere ut vītam agātis. utrum autem sit melius, dī immortālēs sciunt; hominem quidem nēminem scīre crēdō.

63. cum hī decem virī ex moenibus semel discessissent, alia occasiō pācis numquam oblāta est.

64. tantum auxilium nōbīs referet ut nē acerrimī quidem mīlitēs aut pugnāre aut hīc remanēre possint.

65. ille comprehēnsus, cum prīmō impudenter respondere coepisset, dēnique tamen nihil negāvit.

66. dēnique armīs collātīs, imperātor prōmisit decem mīlia mīlitum celerrimē discessūra esse, dummodo satis cōpiārum recipērint.

67. haec mala melius expōnant nē dīvitiās minuant aut honōrēs suōs āmittant.

68. cum cōnsilia hostium ab initiō cognōvissēs, p̄imō tamen ūllum auxilium offerre aut etiam centum mīlitēs prōmittere noluitī.

69. nisi īnsidiae eius patērent, ferrum eius maximē timerēmus.

70. nōnne timent nē et Rōmae et rūrī magnī tumultūs sint?

71. metuō nē id consiliī cēperimus quod nōn facile explicāre possīmus. nunc timeō nē nihil tibi praeter lacrimās queam reddere.