

The imperfect subjunctive

It is relatively easy to form, as long as you remember your preterite.

Three steps to success.

1. Take the third person plural of the verb in the preterite.
2. Take off the ending (ron)
3. Add the new set of endings

-ra	-'ramos (accent the preceding vowel)
-ras	-rais
-ra	-ran

It's the same for ar, er and ir verbs, regular and irregular.

Examples

-ar verb (hablar)

1. Third person plural preterite = hablaron
2. Take off ending = habla
3. Add the new set of endings

Hablara	Habláramos
Hablaras	Hablarais
Hablara	Hablaran

-er and -ir verbs (comer)

1. Third person plural preterite = comieron
2. Take off ending = comie
3. Add the new set of endings

Comiera	Comiéramos
Comieras	Comierais
Comiera	Comieran

This works with any verb. Let's try the normally irregular "ser"

1. Third person plural preterite = fueron
2. Take off ending = fuer
3. Add the new set of endings

Fuera	Fuéramos
Fueras	Fuerais
Fuera	Fueran

Easy isn't it?

Imperfecto de Subjuntivo

Form & Use & Practice

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Use

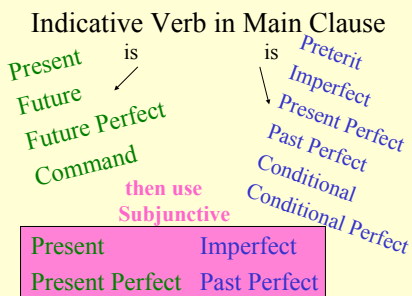
If the main verb is in a present tense, future or command form, then the subjunctive is generally in the present or **present perfect**:

Es una lástima que **haya perdido** el dinero.

If the main verb is in the past (e.g. preterit, imperfect, present or past perfect, conditional or perfect conditional), then the subjunctive is in the **imperfect** or past perfect:

Era una lástima que **no tuviéramos** dinero.

Use



Use

The **imperfect subjunctive** is used to express
a) wish, emotion, influence, request, doubt or denial (noun clauses),
b) hypothetical situations (adverbial clauses),
c) negated or indefinite antecedent (adjective clauses) ...**in the past**.

- Preterit: **Dudé** que Rafael lo **supiera**.
- Imperfect: Yo **quería** que Andrea me **ayudara**.
- Present Perfect: **Me ha alegrado** que nosotros **nos lleváramos** muy bien con la suegra ayer.

Practice – Which verb form?

Dudé que Rafael lo (saber). **supiera**

(I doubted that R. knew it)

Yo **quería** que Andrea me (ayudar). **ayudara**

(I wanted A. to help me/that A. would help me)

Me ha alegrado que nosotros (llevarse) **nos lleváramos**
muy bien con la suegra ayer.

(I was happy that we got along very well
with my mother-in-law yesterday)

Practice – Which verb form?

Dudé que el presidente **dijera** (decir) la verdad.

(I doubted that the president told the truth)

Buscabas una novia que no (fumar). **fumara**

(You looked for a friend who didn't smoke)

Fuimos al concierto antes de que **viniera** (venir) Rosa.
(We went to the concert before R. arrived)

PRETERITE TENSE

<u>-ar conjugations</u>	<u>-er conjugations</u>	<u>-ir conjugations</u>
-é	-í	-í
-amos	-imos	-imos
-aste	-iste	-iste
-o	-ieron	-ieron

IMPERFECT TENSE

<u>-ar conjugations</u>	<u>-er conjugations</u>	<u>-ir conjugations</u>
-aba	-ía	-ía
-ábamos	-íamos	-íamos
-abas	-ías	-ías
-abais	-íais	-íais
-aba	-ían	-ían

PRESENT PERFECT TENSE

<u>haber (present tense)</u>	
he	hemos
has	habéis
ha	han

PAST PERFECT TENSE

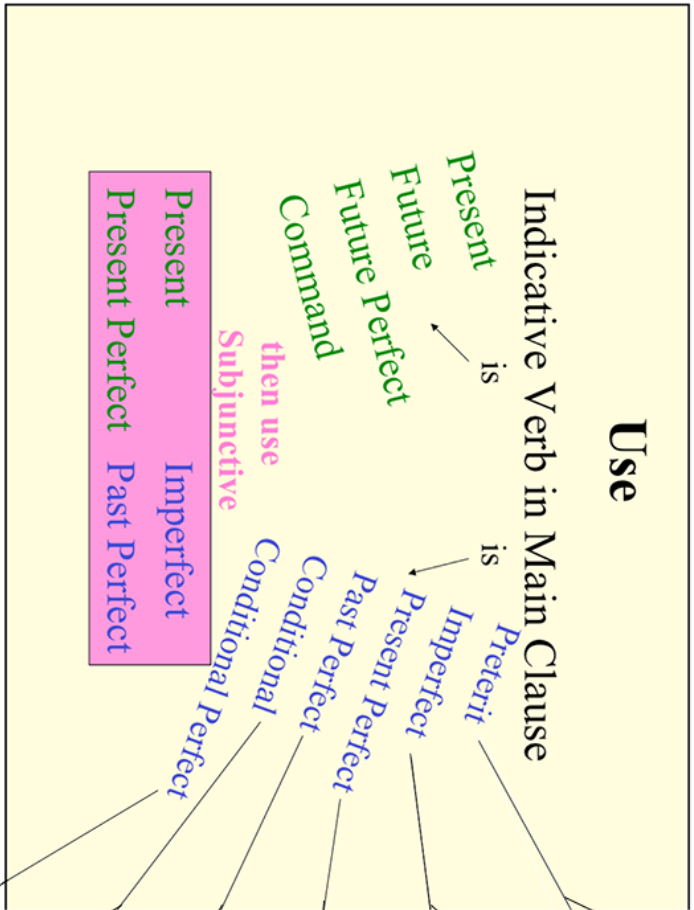
<u>haber (imperfect tense)</u>	
había	habíamos
habías	habíais
había	habían

CONDITIONAL TENSE

-ía	-íamos
-ías	-íais
-ía	-ían

CONDITIONAL PERFECT TENSE

<u>haber (conditional tense)</u>	
habría	habríamos
habrías	habríais
habría	habrían



Subjunctive expressions

Expressions of will or want which express an order, a need, a piece of advice, or a desire:

- aconsejar que- to advise
- decir que- to tell
- dejar que- to let, allow
- desear que- to desire that
- es hora que- it's time that
- es necesario que- it is necessary that
- esperar que- to hope that
- es preciso que- it is necessary that
- evitar que- to avoid
- es importante que- it is important that
- exigir que- to demand that
- hacer falta que- to be necessary that
- hacer que- to make, force
- impedir que- to prevent
- insistir en que- to insist that
- invitar que- to invite
- mandar que- to order
- necesitar que- to need
- pedir que- to ask (someone to do something)
- permitir que- to permit
- preferir que- to prefer that
- prohibir que- to forbid
- proponer que- to propose that
- querer que- to want that
- recomendar que- to recommend
- rogar que- to request, beg
- sugerir que- to suggest that
- Ojalá que- hopefully

Expressions of emotion or feeling which indicate fear, happiness, anger, regret, surprise, or other sentiments or biases.

- alegrarse de que- to be happy that
- es bueno que- it's good that
- es conveniente que- it's convenient that
- es difícil que- it's hard
- es extraño que- it's strange that
- es fácil que- it's easy
- es increíble que- it's incredible that
- es interesante que- it's interesting that
- es inútil que- it's useless that (there's no point)
- es justo que- it's fair that
- es (una) lástima que- it's a pity that
- es malo que- it's (too) bad that
- es mejor que- it's better that
- es peor que- it's worse that
- es preferible que- it's preferable that
- es raro que- it's strange that
- es triste que- it's sad that
- es útil que- it's useful that
- estar contento que- to be happy that
- estar triste que- to be sad that
- extrañarse que- to be amazed that
- gustarse que- to like
- más vale que- it's better that
- sentir que- to regret, be sorry that
- temer que- to fear that
- tener miedo que- to be afraid that
- sorprenderse que- to be surprised that

Expressions of doubt, possibility, opinion

- aparecer que- to appear, seem that
- detestar que- to hate
- dudar que- to doubt
- es dudoso que- it is doubtful that
- es imposible que- it is impossible that
- es improbable que- it is improbable that
- es posible que- it is possible that
- es probable que- it is probable that
- negar que- to deny
- no es cierto que- it is not certain that
- no es claro que- it's not clear that
- no es evidente que- it is not obvious that
- no es obvio que- it is not obvious that
- no es que- it's not that
- no está seguro que- it is not certain that
- no es verdad que- it is not true that
- tal vez- perhaps
- buscar ... que-* to look for
- * Busco un libro que- me interese (it may not exist = doubt)
Busco el libro que- estoy leyendo (I know it exists = no doubt)

Note: the following verbs and expressions do not take the subjunctive when they are used in the affirmative, because they express facts which are considered certain. When negative or interrogatory, they require the subjunctive

- conocer (alguien) que- to know (someone) that
- creer que- to believe that
- esperar que- to hope that
- estar seguro que- to be sure that
- es cierto que- it is certain that
- es claro que- it's clear that
- es evidente que- it is obvious that
- es seguro que- it is certain that
- es una realidad it's a fact that
- es un hecho it's a fact that
- es verdad que- it is true that
- pensar que- to think that
- saber que- to know that

Two Conjugations, One Meaning?

Different Forms of the Imperfect Subjunctive Have Same Meaning

By Gerald Erichsen, About.com Guide

Question: Why are there two forms of the imperfect subjunctive, such as *hablara* and *hablase*? Do they mean the same thing?

Answer: The *-se* form might be considered the "traditional" form of the imperfect (or past) subjunctive, while the *-ra* comes from an old Latin indicative form. Over time, the two verb forms came to be used identically. Today, with a few regional exceptions, the *-ra* form has basically replaced the *-se* form, and so it is the *-ra* form you should learn.

When used as the imperfect subjunctive, the two forms are interchangeable. The *-se* form is sometimes known as a literary form because it is used much less, but there is no difference in meaning.

However, there are a very few cases where the use of the *-ra* form as an indicative verb form have survived in modern Spanish, although you will seldom hear them. In some parts of Latin America as well as some areas near Portugal, you may hear the *-ra* form substitute for the pluperfect (e.g., *fuera* instead of *había sido* to say "had been"). Also, there are some speakers who use the *-ra* form of *haber* as a substitute for the conditional, that is *hubiera conocido* instead of *habría conocido* for "would have known"; that usage can also be found occasionally in literature. In these rare cases where the *-ra* form is used instead of the conditional, the *-se* form can't be used as a substitute for the conditional. It isn't important to learn these variations, but it can be helpful to remember they exist in case you come across them.