

# 31. Subjunctive Mood

## Lesson in a Nutshell

The subjunctive mood is the mood of probability, possibility, wishing, etc. It occurs in only two tenses: present and aorist. It is easy to recognize because

1. it is almost always preceded by certain words (especially ἵνα and ἄν).
2. it has a lengthened connecting vowel.

Since outside of the indicative mood, tense no longer indicates time, an augment is not used for the aorist.

So far, we have only encountered the indicative mood. This is by far the most common mood.

Tense	Voice	Mood	Person	Number
Present	Active	Indicative	1 First	Singular
Imperfect	Middle	Subjunctive	2 Second	Plural
Future	Passive	Imperative	3 Third	
Aorist		(Participle)*		
Perfect		(Infinitive)*		

In the next two lessons, we will conquer the subjunctive mood (chapter 31) and the imperative mood (chapter 32).

You will find these on your Master Chart underneath the indicative mood.

The chart is organized into several sections:

- Indicative Mood:**
  - Imperfect:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle/Passive (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Present:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle/Passive (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Liquid Future:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Future:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Liquid Aorist:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - 2nd Aorist:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Aorist:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Aor Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - 2nd Aor Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Future Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - 2nd Fut Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
- Imperative Mood:**
  - Present:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Future:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Aorist:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - 2nd Aorist:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Aor Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - 2nd Aor Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Future Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - 2nd Fut Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
- Infinitive Mood:**
  - Present:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Future:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Aorist:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - 2nd Aorist:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Aor Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - 2nd Aor Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - Future Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).
  - 2nd Fut Pass:** Active (e.g., ἴσμεν), Middle (e.g., ἴσμεθα).

As we have learned, the indicative is the mood used to portray reality. It makes statements and asks questions.

I am hungry!

I will eat dinner after I finish this lesson.

Does anyone know in which drawer the knives are?

The subjunctive mood is used for possibility or probability.

If I were finished, I would eat.

I am hurrying in order that I might barbecue some hamburgers.

The subjunctive mood has three nice features that make it very easy to spot.

1. Subjunctives only use two tenses.
2. The endings of subjunctives are simple.
3. Context almost always tells you when to expect a subjunctive.

Let's look at these one at a time.

Subjunctive Mood					
★ Present and Aorist tenses only	Present		Aorist		
	Active	M/P	active	middle	passive
★ Look for lengthened connecting vowel	λύω	λύωμαι	λύσω	λύσωμαι	λυθῶ
★ Look for a subjunctive when you see:	λύῃς	λύῃ	λύσῃς	λύσῃ	λυθῆς
ἵνα (in order that)	λύῃ	λύῆται	λύσῃ	λύσῃται	λυθῆ
ὅταν (whenever)	λύωμεν	λυώμεθα	λύσωμεν	λυσώμεθα	λυθῶμεν
ὅς ἄν (whoever)	λύητε	λύησθε	λύσητε	λύσησθε	λυθῆτε
ὅπου ἄν (wherever)	λύωσιν	λύωνται	λύσωσιν	λύσωνται	λυθῶσιν
ἕως (until) ἕως ἄν (until)	“that I might...”	“that I might be...”	“that I might...”	“that I might... (for myself)”	“that I might be...”
εἰ ἄν (if)					

## 1. Subjunctives only use two tenses

In the indicative mood, Greek tense tells us aspect + **time**.

But outside of the indicative mood, time is not a factor.

Mood / Part of Speech	Tense Describes...
Indicative Mood	Aspect + <b>Time</b>
Subjunctive Mood Imperative Mood Infinitives Participles	Aspect Only

Remember that Greek has three possible aspects:

1. Continuous aspect
2. Undefined aspect
3. Perfect aspect

The subjunctive only occurs in the present and aorist tenses.

Ongoing aspect is captured by the present tense.

Undefined aspect is captured by the aorist tense.

This is why...

*The subjunctive mood is found in the*

**Present Tense**

*and*

**Aorist Tense**

*only!*

There is no need for a “future subjunctive” since the subjunctive mood has nothing to do with time.

There is no need for an “imperfect subjunctive” since the present tense already captures the ongoing aspect and there is no need for a “past time” version. The subjunctive mood has nothing to do with time, only aspect.

## 2. The endings of subjunctives are simple

Present		Aorist		
Active	M/P	active	middle	passive
λύω	λύωμαι	λύσω	λύσωμαι	λυθῶ
λύης	λύῃ	λύσης	λύσῃ	λυθῆς
λύῃ	λύῃται	λύσῃ	λύσῃται	λυθῆ
λύωμεν	λύώμεθα	λύσωμεν	λύσώμεθα	λυθῶμεν
λύητε	λύησθε	λύσητε	λύσησθε	λυθῆτε
λύωσιν	λύωνται	λύσωσιν	λύσωνται	λυθῶσιν
“that I might...”	“that I might be...”	“that I might...”	“that I might... (for myself)”	“that I might be...”

Take a look at the endings of the subjunctive. What patterns do you see?

1. Notice the **lengthened connecting vowel**. In every case, it is either an η or an ω.
2. No tricks at all with the present subjunctive. Use the present tense stem and attach the primary endings (with the lengthened connecting vowels).
3. The aorist uses σα but the α gets swallowed up by the big fat connecting vowel. All that is left is the σ.
4. **The aorist subjunctive is not augmented**. This may throw you at first. We are used to the aorist being augmented. If you think about it, I'll bet you can figure out why this is the case.
  - What is the augment used for? ... To tell you we are in the past time.
  - But in the subjunctive mood, tense does not tell us about time, only aspect. Therefore we do not need an augment.

This leaves the aorist subjunctive looking very much like a future. There is no augment and no σα (since the α was swallowed by the lengthened connecting vowel). But there is no such thing as a future subjunctive!

### 3. Context almost always tells you when to expect a subjunctive

Even if you miss all of the other clues, context will still make a subjunctive very hard to overlook. There are certain key words that are nearly always followed by a subjunctive.

If you see...	Look for a subjunctive!
ἵνα	<i>in order that...</i>
ἐάν	<i>if...</i>
ὅταν	<i>whenever...</i>
ὅς ἄν	<i>whoever...</i>
ὅπου ἄν	<i>wherever...</i>
ἕως, ἕως ἄν	<i>until...</i>

Do you see how ἄν is used in most of the clues? When we learned ἄν, we learned that it was an untranslatable particle used to make definite things contingent.

ἄν	untranslatable particle used to make definite things contingent
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In other words, ἄν introduces uncertainty and uncertainty calls for the subjunctive mood.

#### *A few other things about the subjunctive*

1. Did you notice that there are two words used to negate things in Greek, οὐ and μή? Οὐ is used to negate the indicative. Μή is used to negate everything else.
2. The most emphatic way to negate something in Greek is to use οὐ + μή + the aorist subjunctive. It's like negating the possibility of the possibility!

καὶ γὰρ δίδωμι αὐτοῖς ζωὴν αἰώνιον,  
and I am giving to them life eternal

καὶ οὐ μὴ ἀπόλωνται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα  
and not not they shall perish forever

3. The first person subjunctive may be used to exhort. This is called a “hortatory subjunctive.”

εἶπεν ὁ θεός Ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον  
said \* God “Let us make” man...

ἀναβῶμεν εἰς Βαιθηλ  
“Let us go up” into Bethel

4. If a question is asked to which the answer is uncertain, the subjunctive may be used. This is called a deliberative subjunctive.

Τί φάγωμεν; Τί πίνωμεν;  
What shall we eat? What shall we drink?