

The Subjunctive and Formal Structures – Worksheet 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ Score: / 40



Do this worksheet
online and check your
answers instantly

Exercise 1: Complete the sentences

Complete each sentence with the correct form of the word(s) in brackets. Use the subjunctive.

Example: The manager demanded that he ___ (leave) the building. → leave

1. The board insisted that the director _____ (resign) immediately.
2. It is essential that every applicant _____ (be) present at the interview.
3. The doctor recommended that she _____ (not / eat) anything after midnight.
4. We requested that the meeting _____ (postpone) until Friday.
5. It is vital that he _____ (not / be) informed until the contract is signed.
6. The committee proposed that each member _____ (pay) an annual fee.
7. If I _____ (be) in your position, I would accept the offer.
8. Far _____ (it / be) from me to criticise, but your report is rather late.

Exercise 2: Rewrite the sentences

Rewrite each sentence, starting with the words given. Keep the meaning the same.

Example: If you should see Maria, give her my regards. (Should...) → Should you see Maria, give her my regards.

9. If you should need any further information, please contact us. (Should...)

10. If I had known about the delay, I would have taken a taxi. (Had...)

11. If the company were to relocate, many staff would resign. (Were...)

12. If it had not been for your help, we would have failed. (Had...)

13. If it were not for the scholarship, she could not study abroad. (Were...)

14. If you should not receive the parcel by Monday, let us know. (Should...)

15. It was important for all staff to attend the training. (It was important that...)

16. The lawyer advised her not to sign the document. (The lawyer advised that she...)

Exercise 3: Find and correct the mistake

Each sentence contains one mistake. Write the corrected sentence.

Example: It is vital that she is not to be disturbed. → It is vital that she not be disturbed.

17. The teacher suggested that we not to use dictionaries during the test.

18. Had I have known, I would have called you.

19. Were she to accepts the job, she would move to Lisbon.

20. I'd rather you don't tell anyone about this.

21. It's high time we leave for the airport.

22. Should you will require assistance, call reception.

23. The manager insisted that he to arrive on time every day.

24. Suppose he were to found out the truth – what would you do?

Exercise 4: Formal expressions

Complete the sentences with words or phrases from the box. There are two extra options you do not need.

WORD BOX

lest Come so be it as though Should Had time rather unless whether

25. She wrote the instructions down _____ she forget them.

26. _____ what may, we will finish the project on time.

27. If that is the committee's final decision, then _____.

28. He behaves _____ he were the owner of the company.

29. _____ anyone call while I'm out, please take a message.

30. _____ we left earlier, we would have caught the train.

31. It's about _____ you started taking your studies seriously.

32. I would _____ you didn't mention this to anyone.

Exercise 5: Put the words in order

Put the words in the correct order to make sentences or questions.

Example: that / we / recommend / he / be / promoted → We recommend that he be promoted.

33. that / it / essential / is / everyone / on time / be

34. not / we / suggest / that / she / be / told

35. Were / the / train / to / be / delayed / we / would / miss / the / connection

36. Had / told / you / me / I / would / have / helped

37. rather / I'd / you / here / didn't / smoke

38. high / it's / time / went / we / home

39. Is / it / necessary / that / he / be / present / ?

40. Would / you / rather / I / didn't / come / ?

Answer key – The Subjunctive and Formal Structures – Worksheet 1

Exercise 1: Complete the sentences

1. resign

After 'insist that', the subjunctive uses the base form, even in the third person.

2. be

'It is essential that' is followed by the base form 'be' for all persons.

3. not eat

The negative subjunctive is 'not' + base form, with no auxiliary 'do'.

4. be postponed

The passive subjunctive is 'be' + past participle.

5. not be

'Not' comes before the base form 'be' in the negative passive subjunctive.

6. pay

'Propose that' takes the base form, so there is no -s on 'pay'.

7. were

In formal English, 'were' is used for all persons in unreal conditions.

8. be it

'Far be it from me' is a fixed subjunctive expression with inversion.

Exercise 2: Rewrite the sentences

9. Should you need any further information, please contact us.

In the inverted conditional, 'should' replaces 'if' and comes before the subject.

10. Had I known about the delay, I would have taken a taxi.

'Had' replaces 'if' in a formal third conditional.

11. Were the company to relocate, many staff would resign.

'Were + subject + to-infinitive' is a formal way to express an unlikely condition.

12. Had it not been for your help, we would have failed.

In negative inversion, 'not' follows the subject: 'Had it not been for...!'

13. Were it not for the scholarship, she could not study abroad.

'Were it not for' is the formal inverted form of 'If it were not for'.

14. Should you not receive the parcel by Monday, let us know.

Contractions are not used in this inversion; 'not' follows the subject.

15. It was important that all staff attend the training.

The subjunctive keeps the base form 'attend', even in a past context.

16. The lawyer advised that she not sign the document.

The negative subjunctive is 'not' + base form: 'that she not sign'.

Exercise 3: Find and correct the mistake

17. The teacher suggested that we not use dictionaries during the test.

The negative subjunctive has no 'to': 'not use'.

18. Had I known, I would have called you.

The inverted third conditional is 'Had + subject + past participle'.

19. Were she to accept the job, she would move to Lisbon.

'Were ... to' is followed by the bare infinitive.

20. I'd rather you didn't tell anyone about this.

'Would rather' + a different subject takes a past form to refer to the present or future.

21. It's high time we left for the airport.

'It's high time' is followed by a past form with present meaning.

22. Should you require assistance, call reception.

After inverted 'should', use the bare infinitive, not 'will'.

23. The manager insisted that he arrive on time every day.

The subjunctive uses the base form without 'to'.

24. Suppose he were to find out the truth – what would you do?

'Were to' needs the base form 'find', not the past participle.

Exercise 4: Formal expressions

25. **lest**

'Lest' means 'so that ... not' and is followed by the subjunctive.

26. **Come**

'Come what may' is a fixed subjunctive expression meaning 'whatever happens'.

27. **so be it**

'So be it' is a formulaic subjunctive expressing acceptance.

28. **as though**

'As though' + 'were' describes an unreal comparison.

29. **Should**

Inverted 'should' introduces a polite, formal condition.

30. **Had**

'Had' + subject + past participle replaces 'If we had left'.

31. **time**

'It's about time' + past form expresses that something should already be happening.

32. **rather**

'Would rather' + subject + past form expresses a preference about someone else's actions.

Exercise 5: Put the words in order

33. **It is essential that everyone be on time.**

Adjective of importance + 'that' + subject + base form.

34. **We suggest that she not be told.**

In the negative passive subjunctive, 'not' comes before 'be'.

35. **Were the train to be delayed, we would miss the connection.**

'Were' + subject + 'to' begins a formal hypothetical condition.

36. **Had you told me, I would have helped.**

The inverted condition 'Had you told me' can come before or after the main clause.

37. **I'd rather you didn't smoke here.**

'I'd rather' + subject + past form makes a polite request.

38. **It's high time we went home.**

'It's high time' + subject + past simple.

39. **Is it necessary that he be present?**

In questions, the subjunctive in the 'that' clause stays in the base form.

40. **Would you rather I didn't come?**

In questions with 'would rather', invert 'would' and the subject; the past form follows.

Notes for teachers: Start by eliciting verbs and adjectives that trigger the subjunctive (insist, recommend, essential, vital), and point out that the verb takes the base form for every person. Learners often add -s in the third person, use 'to' after 'not' ('that she not to go'), or keep 'if' in inverted conditionals ('If had I known'). Remind them that 'should + infinitive' is a common British alternative to the subjunctive. As a follow-up, ask learners to write a short formal email or set of meeting minutes that uses at least five of the structures.