ENGLISH LANGUAGE II

MODULE 4:
SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD
Explanations

It's time

It's time, it's high time
These are followed by past simple or continuous, though the time referred to is unreal. See Grammar 8.

It's time we left. It's high time I was going.

Wishes

• Present/future time
  Notice the past verb forms after wish.
  These are wishes where you want to change a present/future state.
  I wish I had a motorbike. (I don’t have one now.)
  I wish you weren’t leaving. (You are leaving.)
  I wish I was going on holiday with you next week. (I am not going.)

• Would
  Would is used when the speaker wants somebody or something else to change.
  I wish he would change his mind and marry Jane.
  I wish it would stop raining.
  The use with would is often used to describe an annoying habit.
  I wish you wouldn’t make such a mess.

• Past time
  As with present wishes, the verb form after wish is one stage further back in the past. These are wishes referring to a past event, which cannot be changed.
  I wish I hadn’t eaten so much.
  This use of wish is common after if only to express regrets. See Grammar 8.

• Hope
  Wishes about simple future events are expressed with hope.
  I hope it doesn’t (won’t) rain tomorrow.
  I hope you’ll have a lovely time in Portugal (on your holiday next week).

I’d rather/I prefer (followed by a clause)

• I’d rather is followed by past verb forms in the same way as wishes about the present. It expresses preference about actions.
  I’d rather you didn’t smoke in here.
  Both I’d rather and I’d sooner are used with normal verb forms when comparing nouns or phrases.
  I’d rather be a sailor than a soldier, (present)
  I’d rather have lived in Ancient Greece than Ancient Rome, (past)
• *I'd prefer* can be used in the same way, but note that *prefer* in this type of sentence has an object *it*.
  
  *I'd prefer it if you didn’t go.*
  
  However, *I’d prefer* is not followed by an unreal verb form in other situations.
  
  *I'd prefer tea to coffee.*
  *I'd prefer you to go swimming (rather than go jogging).*

**As if, as though**

Real and unreal

The verb form here depends on whether the situation is true or unreal.

*You look as if you’re having second thoughts.* (True. He is having second thoughts.)

*He acts as if he were in charge.* (Unreal. He isn’t in charge.)

*I feel as if an express train had hit me.* (It didn’t hit me.)

Note however, that the more colloquial *like* does not require this verb form change. Compare:

*You look like you've just seen a ghost*

*You look as if you’d just seen a ghost.*

**Suppose and imagine**

Understood conditions

The conditional part of these sentences is often understood but not stated.

*Imagine we won the pools!*

*Suppose someone told you that I was a spy!*

*Imagine we'd never met!* (we have met)

As with conditional sentences, if the event referred to is a real possibility, rather than imaginary, a present verb form is possible:

*Suppose it starts raining, what'll we do?*

**Formal Subjunctives**

• Insisting, demanding etc

After verbs such as *demand, insist, suggest, require* which involve an implied obligation, the subjunctive may be used in formal style. This has only one form, that of the infinitive, and there is no third person -s, or past form. The verb *be* has *be* for all forms.

*They demanded that he leave at once.*

*The school Principal suggested that he be awarded a scholarship.*

• Less formal usage

Less formally, *should* can be used, and colloquially no verb form change is made, or an infinitive construction is used.

*They demanded that he should leave.*

*They demanded that he left,* (informal)

**Formulaic Subjunctives**

These are fixed expressions all using subjunctive. Typical expressions are:

*God save the Queen!*

*Be that as it may ...*

*Come what may ...*
Practice

1 Underline either *hope* or *wish* in each sentence.

a) I *hope/wish* I'll see you again soon.

b) I *hope/wish* the weather improves soon.

c) I *hope/wish* I knew the answer.

d) I *hope/wish* you didn't have to go.

e) I *hope/wish* you'd stop shouting so much.

f) I *hope/wish* nothing goes wrong.

g) I *hope/wish* it would stop raining.

h) I *hope/wish* you can come to my party.

i) I *hope/wish* you don't mind.

j) I *hope/wish* we could meet next week.

2 Complete each second sentence so that the meaning is similar to the first sentence.

a) I wish you were a bit tidier.
   I wish you would ........................................

b) I wish you were more interested in your school work.
   I wish you would ........................................

c) I wish I spoke more languages.
   I wish I could ............................................

d) I wish I had enough money to buy a car.
   I wish I could ............................................

e) I wish they had more chess books in the library.
   I wish the library would ................................

f) I wish there was some soap in the bathroom.
   I wish the cleaners would ................................

g) I just wish my partner was a bit more romantic!
   I just wish my partner would ..........................


3 Put each verb in brackets into an appropriate verb form.

a) I'd rather you didn't watch... (not/watch) television while I'm reading.
b) It's high time you... (start) working seriously.
c) I wish I... (spend) more time swimming last summer.
d) Helen is bossy. She acts as if she... (own) the place.
e) I wish you... (not/keep) coming late to class.
f) Suppose a complete stranger... (leave) you a lot of money in their will!
g) I wish I... (go) to your party after all.
h) I'd rather you... (sit) next to Susan, please.
i) The government demanded that the ambassador... (be) recalled,
j) You are lucky going to Italy. I wish I... (go) with you.

4 Correct the error(s) in each sentence.

a) I wish I bought that old house. ...I wish I had bought...
b) I'd rather you don't eat all the bread...
c) It's time I go...
d) I wish I own a motorbike...
e) I wish we are not leaving in the morning...
f) Sue would rather reading than watching television.

g) Come what comes, I'll be on your side...
h) I hope it would stop raining...
i) I'd prefer if you didn't wait...
j) I wish I didn't listen to you before...
5 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given.

a) Do you ever regret not going to university?
   wish
   Do you ever wish you had gone to university?

b) I should really be going home now.
   time
   It's home now.

c) I'd rather not go by plane.
   prefer
   I'd go by plane.

d) Jack doesn't know all the answers, though he pretends to.
   acts
   Jack all the answers.

e) I'd love to be able to go with you to the opera.
   wish
   I go with you to the opera.

f) I wish I hadn't sold that old painting.
   pity
   It's that old painting.

g) I'd rather you didn't stay long at the party.
   better
   It stay long at the party.

h) The management said it was important for us to wear dark suits to the meeting.
   insisted
   The management dark suits to the meeting.

i) I've had enough of your constant complaining!
   wish
   I complaining all the time!

j) I'd love to be sitting on a beach in Turkey right now!
   wish
   I on a beach in Turkey right now!
6 **Complete each sentence with a suitable word or phrase.**

a) I wish you **would stop** making so much noise late at night!

b) I'd rather the children **stop** on the television without permission.

c) Suppose **half** the money I owe you. Would that satisfy you?

d) I hope **not** get into trouble on my account. What do you think they'll say?

e) This is an awful hotel. I wish we **could** to the Grand instead.

f) It is absolutely **necessary** you contact head office in advance.

g) I think it's high time we **lock** all the windows at night.

h) Would you rather I **offer** the lunch, if you feel tired?

i) I wish my car **run** as fast as yours.

j) I'd prefer you **don't** smoke in here, if you don't mind.

7 **Complete the letter by writing one word in each space. A contraction (don't) counts as one word.**

Dear Tom,

Well, this time next week you'll be somewhere in Europe on a train. I'm sure any mum would worry! Actually, you're very lucky. I'd love to **travel** and be able to go off around the world. I often wish I **had** travelled more when I was younger. I really hope you **look after** yourself, but do be careful, won't you? You're only 18 after all. Do take care with your money, won't you? And I'd rather you **spend** too many nights in your tent alone. It's so dangerous. I suggest you only **pitch** your tent in a proper camp site.

I wish you **stay** going quite so soon. It's a pity you **can't** stay until after Dad's 50th birthday. But never mind. I wish Dad **would** be at the airport to see you off, but he's got some really important business that day.

Suppose we **go** out to see you in June?!! ... Just a thought. Anyway, just remember, if you get into any trouble, we're only a phone call away, and come what (10) **may** we'll always be there for you.

Love, Mum
Entry test

1. For each of the following pairs of sentences, decide a) if both are correct or only one, and b) if they are both correct, do they mean the same?
   
   EXAMPLE: if he had agreed, we’d start now.
   
   if he were to agree, we’d start now.
   
   Both correct; different meaning (one past reference, one future reference)

   a. Police are demanding that all cars are searched.
   Police are demanding that all cars be searched.

   b. Come what may, we’ll still go out tonight.
   Be that as it may, we’ll still go out tonight.

   c. I’d rather you hadn’t spoken to him like that.
   I’d rather you didn’t speak to him like that.

   d. Had I got on that plane, I would have been killed.
   If I got on that plane, I would have been killed.

   e. It’s getting late: it’s time I wasn’t here.
   It’s getting late, it’s time I left.

2. In each of the following sentences fill the three gaps with one of the words given. You can use some words more than once. Some words you do not need at all.

   long forgotten had will get weren’t better provided drive have are run must

   a. As ________ as we ________ there early enough, we ________ get good seats.

   b. If we ________ leaving, I’d ________ ________ my coat.

   c. ________ we don’t ________ into heavy traffic, we ________ see you at seven.

   d. If those ________ Marion’s keys, she ________ have ________ them.

   e. If you ________ ________ so fast it’s not surprising you ________ an accident.

3. Complete each of the following sentences in such a way that it is as similar in meaning as possible to the sentence before it.

   a. It’s lucky I know you or I’d be deeply offended.

   b. Fortunately, they’re on e-mail, otherwise they’d never have received the news in time.

   c. Could you hold my briefcase so I can move this table?

   d. They may change their minds, in which case they’ll let us know.

   e. I don’t think we will, but if we did sell this flat, how much do you think we’d get?

4. Fill each of the gaps with a suitable word or phrase.

   a. Even if you ________ help you, I don’t think I would have been able to.

   b. I ________ up so early this morning if I’d known you weren’t coming until after lunch.

   c. If you’d known then what you know now, ________ done?

   d. Had ________ your timely intervention, they’d have given nearly all their money to that con man.

   e. If only ________ to my father’s advice, I’d be a successful lawyer by now.

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For subjunctives and Unreal Past; conditionals, see Section 1.

For unlikely conditionals in the present and future, see Section 3.

For past conditionals, see Section 4.

Total score
THE BASICS

1 SUBJUNCTIVES

The subjunctive has limited uses in English.

- The Present subjunctive consists of the infinitive without to in all persons (see Section 1.1):
  * I suggest he stop as soon as he becomes tired.
- The Past subjunctive exists only were in all persons - I were, he were, we were, etc. (see Section 1.2):
  * She’d do it if she weren’t so shy. (= but she is)

2 UNREAL PAST TENSES

Unreal Past tenses, like the Past subjunctive, are used especially to talk about impossible, unlikely or hypothetical conditions. We use a Past Simple form to talk about the present and future, and a Past Perfect form to talk about the past:

  * I wish he wasn’t so shy. (= but he is)
  * If only I hadn’t listened to you. (= but I did)

3 ZERO, FIRST, SECOND AND THIRD CONDITIONALS

We commonly express a condition using an if-clause with a main clause. Conditional sentences are often categorised as:

**Zero**  
Present + Present  
*If you press this button, the engine stops.*

**First**  
Present + will  
*If she rings this evening, I’ll let you know.*

**Second**  
Past + would  
*What would you do if you became President?*

**Third**  
Past Perfect + would have  
*If I hadn’t seen her, she’d have drowned.*

Note: the Past and Past Perfect in Second and Third conditionals are ‘Unreal’ Pasts.

- These are useful patterns to learn when studying conditionals, but they are not the only patterns. In this Unit, conditionals are categorised as:

4 REAL AND UNREAL CONDITIONALS

Real conditionals use normal tenses. They refer to things we think are true or likely. They include ‘Zero’ and ‘First’ conditionals:

  * If you were working late last night, how come I didn’t see your light on? (= past)
  * If you feel disappointed, that’s natural. (= present)
  * If you do that again, I’m going to tell mum. (= future)

Unreal conditionals use Unreal Past tenses. They refer to things we think are untrue or unlikely. They include ‘Second’ and ‘Third’ conditionals:

  * It would be easier if Leeds were on a direct rail link to Oxford. (= present)
  * If you were going to travel to Tibet, when would be the best time to go? (= future)
  * If I’d listened more carefully to his directions, I wouldn’t have got lost. (= past)

5 FALSE CONDITIONALS

Included in real conditionals are what we call false conditionals. These are called ‘false’ because the speaker knows that the condition has already been fulfilled (see Section 2.5):

  * If you don’t like opera, why are you here?
  * If you didn’t like the film, you should have left.
  * It’s locked. Well if that’s the case we’ll have to go round the back.

6 ALTERNATIVES TO IF

If is not the only word we can use to introduce conditionals:

  * So / As long as you promise not to tell, you can come too.
  * You can drive this car provided / providing (that) you’re fully insured.
  * Suppose / Supposing something goes wrong, what then? I think I’ll accept it, assuming the offer’s still there. Mario can’t come with us, even if he is your best friend. If only we’d get there sooner, the accident would never have happened. You can come in on condition that you don’t stay long. Unless Peter changes his attitude, he’s going to find himself in trouble. We’ll buy it if and when our income improves.

**watch out!**

- Unless is close in meaning to ‘if ... not’. We can’t always use it as an alternative to if not:
  - ☑ I’d feel happier unless she talked too much.
  - ✗ I’d feel happier if she didn’t talk so much.
- We often use if only without a result clause:
  - If only we’d got there sooner!

**When and if**

These words are similar in some languages but very different in English:

  * If Sally comes this evening, we’ll talk it over with her. (= she may come)
  * When Sally comes this evening, we’ll talk it over with her. (= she is coming)
SECTION I
Subjunctives and Unreal Past

1 PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE
Present subjunctive (see The Basics) used mainly in certain fixed phrases and in formal, impersonal English. In more informal language we commonly use the Present Simple or should. (The examples below give all the alternative forms.)

We use Present subjunctive:
• in that-clauses after report verbs, adjectives or nouns to express plans, urgency, intentions or suggestions:
  The police insisted the car (should) be moved immediately. The police insist the car is / be moved immediately.

  Words often followed by a Present subjunctive are:
  Verbs: insist, suggest, request, order, recommend, propose, think

  Adjectives: advisable, essential, desirable, preferable

  Nouns: decision, insistence, demand, requirement, condition

• after if (see section 3.4): If he (should) be found / is found guilty, he’ll be jailed for ten years.

• after whether: Whether she (should) agree / agrees or not, we’re going to have to go ahead.

• after whatever: Whatever his reasons be / are, they are insufficient to excuse him.

• The Present subjunctive is common in particular phrases:
  Far be it from me… So be it. Be that as it may…
  Suffice it to say… Come what may…
  Heaven forbid! Long live the Queen.

2 PAST SUBJUNCTIVE
We use the Past subjunctive (were in all persons) in formal English. Its meaning is similar to Unreal Past:
If the minister were here, he would no doubt refute the allegations. (= formal)

• However, it is more common to use was and were in their usual ways:
  I wish he wasn’t such a bighead. (= informal)

• Were is common only in the phrase if I were you, and in the formal conditional pattern were + subject + infinitive:
  I wouldn’t argue with her if I were you.
  Were the vote to go against me, I’d resign.

3 UNREAL PAST
We use Unreal Past or Past subjunctive to discuss imaginary situations, to express impossible wishes, and to make proposals and polite requests:
• after if when we think it is unlikely or impossible that the condition will be fulfilled:
  If she were to eat / ate fish more often, she might get to like it.

• to replace an if-clause when we imagine past, present or future events being different:
  Had he agreed, he’d have become the team captain.
  Were he to agree, he’d probably become the next coach.

• after if only to express regrets and frustration:
  If only he were / was more adventurous.
  If only I hadn’t drunk so much coffee! (= but I did)

• after wish when we are wishing for the virtually impossible. For more reasonable wishes, we commonly use would or could:
  I wish I weren’t / wasn’t having the injection tomorrow. (= but I am) I wish I’d listened to you. (= but I didn’t) I wish you wouldn’t shout all the time.

• after would rather and would sooner to express preferences:
  Do you mean you’d sooner I weren’t / wasn’t here?
  I’d rather you hadn’t spoken so rudely to him.

• After as if and as though we use Present and Present Perfect forms to suggest something is likely to be true. Unreal Past suggests it is unlikely or untrue:
  The man speaks as if he has / had never heard of the place.
  He acts as though he owns / owned the place.

• after imperative suppose and imagine (Present tense is also possible):
  Imagine he were to tell you / told you / tells you his most personal secrets. Suppose she were to have followed / had followed your advice. (= but she didn’t)

• after if it’s time:...
  It’s time I wasn’t here. (Past subjunctive is not possible)
  It’s time we left. It’s time to leave.

Which sentence does not contain a Present or Past subjunctive, or Unreal Past tense?
1 I propose that this street be closed to cars.
2 If I was in his shoes, I’d give up.
3 I’m suggesting that he reconsider my proposals.
4 Imagine you are going to fall asleep.
5 You talk as if you really meant it.
Practice

1. Add one of these common phrases to each of the sentences.
   - come what may
   - suffice it to say
   - be that as it may
   - God forbid
   - so be it
   - far be it from me
   1. If, ________ , you were to die, who'd run the business?
   2. I don't want to explain. ________ Aunt Sarah is coming to stay after all.
   3. If you really want to drop out of college, then ________.
   4. ________. I'm determined to finish decorating my room this weekend.
   5. ________. to tell you what to do, but you'd be mad to marry him.
   6. "This medicine tastes horrible!" "_______. It will cure your cough."

2. Fill each of the gaps with one suitable word. (In this exercise, words such as didn't and weren't count as one word.)
   Example: Imagine we hadn't met all those years ago!
   1. I can't tell you how much I wish the architect ________ here to see the results of his work.
   2. It's time you ________ able to take full responsibility for your own actions.
   3. If he ________ so self-righteous, he'd realise he was wrong.
   4. Imagine you ________ completely blind: how would it affect your life?
   5. He looked for all the world as though he ________ been sleeping in his clothes.
   6. I really wish I ________ always in so much of a hurry these days.
   7. If only she ________ so impossibly beautiful!
   8. I'd rather you ________ talk so loudly, if you don't mind.

3. Fill each of the numbered blanks in the passages with one word.
   a. Thank you for your e-mail. I agree that it is essential you be fully ________ with the facts of the case. They are as follows. It was agreed six months ago that, come what ________, the above residence ________ decorated inside and out before the end of June. This has not happened and my solicitor has recommended ________ with legal action forthwith.
   May I suggest that you ________ me as a matter of some urgency.
   b. Just ________ , you ________ not eaten for a week or two and ________ absolutely starving and the only food that ________ available to you was a trapped rat that you ________ no way of cooking, would you be tempted?
   c. Dear Maria,
   I'm afraid I've got some bad news. I know we agreed it was advisable that Stavros ________ the summer holidays with you. Unfortunately my parents have changed their minds and are now insisting he ________ to Athens to stay with Aunt Sotiria. ________ to say, they are not allowing any discussion! Athens it is, although he really wishes he ________ at least share the period between you and his aunt. Dimos is going to England for the summer. If only life ________ so simple for all of us.

4. Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given.
   Do not change the word given. Use between three and eight words, including the word given.
   Example: The management want to suspend you without pay.
   preference
   The management's preference is that you be suspended without pay.
   1. Our neighbour talks as if he owned half the county, doesn't he?
   think
   To hear our neighbour ________ county, wouldn't you?
   2. What would you do if you couldn't look after yourself?
   incapable
   Suppose you ________ yourself, what would you do?
   3. It is essential that you tell us everything.
   importance
   It is of the ________ be kept fully informed.
   4. If they reject her appeal, she'll lose all her insurance claims.
   down
   Should her appeal ________ lose all her insurance claims.
   5. Are you saying you don't want me here?
   sooner
   Are you saying ________ here?
UNIT 8a Grammar: Wishes - Unreal Past

Form
I wish (If only) + past simple
I wish he were/was here now.

I wish (If only) + past perfect
If only he had behaved himself at the party last night!

I wish (If only) + subject + would + present infinitive
We never say: I wish I would
I wish he would stop lying. (I’m fed up with his lies.)
I wish you would help me. (Please, help me.)

I wish (If only) + subject + could + present infinitive
I wish I could speak French.

I wish (If only) + inanimate subject + would + present infinitive
If only it would stop raining.

Use
regret about a present situation which is unreal, impossible or unlikely
regret about a past situation
complaint/regret about the present; willingness, request; wish about sth not likely to happen; unwillingness; insistence
regret about present or future situation caused by lack of ability
a wish for a change in the future which is not likely to happen

Notes
• Wish expresses a hypothetical desire, if only expresses regret or strong desire. Both wish and if only can be used interchangeably, but wish is used for something that may happen, whereas if only is used to express that what is wished does not exist.
  I wish she wasn’t/weren’t always late.
  If only I knew what to do!
• Wish + infinitive = want to (formal).
  I wish to be informed of all the details. (I want to be informed of all the details.)
• Wish + personal object + object is used in some fixed expressions of good wishes.
  I wish you all the best.
• We use hope instead of wish for wishes about things that are likely to happen.
  I hope you get the job. (NOT: I wish you would get the job).

1 Write a wish for each of the following sentences.
1 You want to go on holiday this summer, but you haven’t got any leave left.

2 You neglected to have your clothes dry-cleaned.

3 Louise realised she left her lecture notes at home.

4 Tim didn’t have enough time to go to the bank during his lunch hour.

5 It was unusually cold, so we couldn’t go to the beach.

6 Mathilda wanted to be auditioned for the National Ballet.

7 You didn’t put the ice cream in the fridge and now it’s spoilt.

8 You didn’t do mathematics in high school and now you regret it.

9 It didn’t occur to you to take wet weather gear on your walking tour in Scotland and now you’re drenched.
Your best friend won’t lend you her white silk dress because last time you spilt coffee on it.

Theresa’s dog keeps the neighbours awake because it barks all night.

You have lost your reference from one of your previous jobs and now you need it for an interview.

I wish I hadn’t read the letter.

If only I hadn’t read the letter.

I regret reading/having read the letter.

I’m sorry I read the letter.

It’s a pity I read the letter.

“I wish he would be more patient,” she said.

She complained that he wasn’t patient.

She complained that he was impatient.

I would love to travel abroad.

If only I could travel abroad.

I wish I could travel abroad.

Why don’t you drive more carefully?

I wish you would drive more carefully.

Please drive more carefully.

I’d rather you drove more carefully.

You’d better drive more carefully.

It’s time you started driving more carefully.

You would be better off driving more carefully.

It’s a pity I am not wealthy.

I wish I were wealthy.

If only I were wealthy.

I want to see you in my office.

I wish to see you in my office.

Please, stop talking because I can’t concentrate on the film.

quiet

I can’t concentrate on the film.

Why don’t you show me your stamp collection?

let

your stamp collection.

You look tired. Why don’t you go to bed early tonight?

better

You look tired.

Zoe has a job which makes her feel very stressed.

less

Zoe has a job.

Meg wants to be left alone because she’s upset.

rather

Meg wants to be left alone.

She’s upset.

I regret having committed myself to so many private lessons in the evenings.

not

If I had committed myself to so many private lessons in the evenings.

He regrets not taking her threats of leaving him seriously.

wishes

He wishes.

of leaving him seriously.

I would love to go on a round-the-world trip.

able

I want to go on a round-the-world trip.
Choose the correct item.

0. If only I .......... then what I know now!
   A) had known      C) could know
   B) knew          D) was known

1. “It’s time you .......... in bed. It’s almost midnight, isn’t it?”
   “You’re right.”
   A) are               C) had been
   B) have been        D) go

2. “That trip was a nightmare.”
   “Yes, I wish we .......... .”
   A) went               C) hadn’t gone
   B) have gone        D) go

3. “I overslept and was late for work again!”
   “You’d .......... that clock fixed; it hasn’t worked for a week now.”
   A) rather have      C) better have
   B) better to have   D) rather had

4. “You missed an exciting start to the football match.”
   “Yes, it’s a pity I .......... on time.”
   A) am not            C) wasn’t
   B) haven’t been     D) hadn’t been

5. If only I .......... the bill; we wouldn’t have been cut off.
   A) paid               C) had been paid
   B) have paid         D) had paid

6. “I shouldn’t have missed Mary’s party.”
   “It’s a pity you ..........; we had a lovely time.”
   A) haven’t come     C) weren’t coming
   B) didn’t come      D) hadn’t come

7. He regrets .......... enough time to finish the exercises.
   A) not to have     C) not having
   B) not have had   D) to not have

8. “Do you mind if I tell Mary about your trip?”
   “Well, I’d rather you .......... anyone else about it.”
   A) wouldn’t tell   C) not to tell
   B) didn’t tell     D) haven’t told

9. “You’re looking tired.”
   “I’m exhausted. I wish my neighbours .......... loud music when I’m trying to sleep.”
   A) haven’t played   C) won’t play
   B) wouldn’t play    D) hadn’t played

**UNREAL PAST**

We can use the past simple to talk about imaginary, unreal or improbable situations in the present, and past perfect when we refer to imaginary, unreal or improbable situations in the past. This use of the past tenses is called unreal past.

### Past Simple
- **conditional type 2**
  If I were you, I would resign.

- **wishes (present)**
  I wish I were in London.

- I’d rather/sooner sb ... (for present situations)
  I’d sooner you answered me now.

- **suppose/supposing**
  Suppose you were fired, what would you do?

- as if/as though
  He behaves as if he owned the place!

- It’s (about/high) time...
  It’s time we left.

### Past Perfect
- **conditional type 3**
  If I had been told earlier, I wouldn’t have acted this way.

- **wishes (past)**
  If only you hadn’t ruined my dress!

- I’d rather/sooner sb ... (for past situations)
  I’d rather he hadn’t behaved like that last night.

- **suppose/supposing**
  Suppose you had lost all your money?

- as if/as though (when the action of the as if - clause has happened earlier than the action of the main clause)
  He looked as if he had won the pools!
8a Grammar: Wishes - Unreal Past

Notes

• Suppose can be followed by a verb in the present tense to express a situation which may happen in the future or to introduce suggestions.
  Suppose he isn’t at work, where shall we find him?
  “We haven’t got any Coke.” “Suppose we drink lemonade instead.”

• As if/as though can also be used with perfect tenses to express a real comparison.
  The cottage looks as if it has been renovated. (It probably has).

WOULD RATHER = I'D PREFER

when the subject of would rather is also the subject of the following verb
I'd rather + present bare infinitive (present/future reference)
I'd rather perfect bare infinitive (past reference)

I'd rather have fish for lunch. I like it a lot.
I'd rather have told him before. He wouldn’t have been angry with me.

when the subject of would rather is different from the subject of the following verb
I'd rather + past simple (present/future)
I'd rather + past perfect (past)

I’d rather you left before the guests arrive. They’ll be here soon.
I’d rather they had left earlier. They wouldn’t have missed their flight.

HAD BETTER = SHOULD

I had better + present bare infinitive (present/future)
We had better cut down on fats. (=We should cut down on fats.)

It would have been better if + Past Perfect (past)
It would have been better if you hadn’t behaved impolitely.

Notes

• prefer + gerund/noun + to + gerund/noun (general)
  I prefer orange juice to tomato juice.
  I prefer swimming to climbing.

• prefer + full infinitive + rather than + bare infinitive (general)
  I prefer to travel by car rather than (travel) by coach.

• would prefer + full infinitive + rather than + bare infinitive (specific)
  I’d prefer to have apple pie rather than have spinach pie.

• would rather + bare infinitive + than + bare infinitive (general or specific)
  I’d rather sleep than watch TV.
8a Grammar: Wishes - Unreal Past

CONVERSATIONAL GRAMMAR

4 Choose the correct item.

1 “It’s a pity Sarah is still unemployed.”
   “Yes, if only she .......... university.”
   A would have finished  C would finish
   B had finished       D finishes

2 I wish I .......... their help when it was offered.
   A would accept      C had accepted
   B have accepted    D accepted

3 Suppose she .......... that outrageous story circulating around the office; she’d be furious!
   A has heard      C were heard
   B would hear    D had heard

4 “Susan looks ready to cry”.
   “It looks as if Peter .......... her birthday again!”
   A had been forgetting  C has been forgetting
   B had forgotten     D has forgotten

5 “Why are you glaring at me?”
   “You treat me as if I .......... your slave.”
   A were             C have been
   B was being       D had been

6 I’d rather you .......... the deal in writing by the end of next week.
   A confirmed       C had confirmed
   B have confirmed  D confirm

7 “You’re looking rather pleased with yourself.”
   “Suppose your boss .......... you a big bonus, you would too.”
   A had offered     C would offer
   B has been offering D had been offered

8 It’s time you .......... about your future.
   A to think       C thought
   B had thought   D think

9 If only she .......... to her principles, she wouldn’t have been led astray.
   A sticks              C had stuck
   B stuck                D have stuck

10 “I can’t think of a good excuse for being late.”
   “You .......... be honest and tell the truth.”
   A had better        C would have been better
   B would better     D had better to

STRUCTURAL CONVERSION

1 If you don’t tell the truth, he’ll punish you.
   You’d better tell the truth or else he’ll punish you.

2 If I were you, I would accept his proposal.
   You should accept his proposal.
   You’d better accept his proposal.

3 “You’d better take a nap,” Mother said.
   Mother advised me to take a nap.
   He advised me not to be rude to her.
   He suggested that I shouldn’t be rude to her.

4 They asked for a spare key. Why didn’t you give them one?
   They asked for a spare key. You should have given them one.

5 There’ll be trouble if he behaves like that again.
   He’d better not behave like that again or else there will be trouble.

7 Why didn’t you tell him so?
   It would have been better if you had told him so.
   If I were you, I would have told him so.
   I’d rather/sooner you had told him so.
   I wish you had told him so.

8 I’d rather watch TV than listen to music.
   I prefer (watching) TV to (listening to) music.

9 I’d rather stay indoors than go to the party.
   I’d rather stay indoors than rather than go to the party.
   I’d prefer to stay indoors rather than to go to the party.

10 I prefer to play tennis rather than play polo.
   I’d rather play tennis than (play) polo.
   I’d sooner play tennis than (play) polo.

11 I’d rather you left now.
   I’d rather you to leave now.

12 It’s time you learnt how to cook.
   It’s time for you to learn how to cook.
   You should learn how to cook.
   You must learn how to cook.
5 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between three and eight words, including the word given.

1 Why didn’t you take the day off work? better
   It ................................................................................... the day off work.

2 “You’d better tidy your desk” he said.
to
   He .................................................................................... desk.

3 He’d rather eat with friends than eat alone.
   prefers
   He .................................................................................... alone.

4 If we don’t leave now, we won’t catch the train.
or
   We’d ................................................................................... catch the train.

5 It’s time you started learning French.
   for
   It’s ................................................................................... lessons.

6 I prefer to go by car rather than go by coach.
   sooner
   I .................................................................................... by coach.

7 You really should learn to drive.
   high
   It’s .................................................................................... to drive.

8 I’d prefer you to do the washing-up now.
   rather
   I’d ................................................................................... now.

CONVERSATIONAL GRAMMAR

6 Choose the correct item.

1 She’s such a snob; she behaves ........ the Queen.
   A as if she has been C as if she were
   B like she were D like she was

2 “Have I done something wrong?”
   “I wish you ........ more tactful; you’re always offending people.”
   A were C were being
   B have been D had been being

3 I’d rather you ........ a noise last night; I couldn’t get to sleep.
   A wouldn’t make C didn’t make
   B hadn’t made D haven’t made

4 If only we ........ more people, then we wouldn’t be feeling so lonely.
   A had known C have know
   B knew D were known

5 It’s high time you ........ the balcony. It’s covered in leaves and dust.
   A cleaned C had cleaned
   B to be cleaned D to have cleaned
28 The subjunctive

290 Form

A The present subjunctive has exactly the same form as the infinitive; therefore the present subjunctive of to be is be for all persons, and the present subjunctive of all other verbs is the same as their present tense except that s is not added for the third person singular:

The queen lives here. (simple present tense)
Long live the queen! (subjunctive)

B The past subjunctive has exactly the same form as the simple past except that with the verb be the past subjunctive form is either I/he/she/it was or I/he/she/it were. In expressions of doubt or unreality were is more usual than was:

He behaves as though he were the owner. (But he is not the owner.)

In conversation, however, was is often used instead of were (see also 225).
Past subjunctives are often known as ‘unreal pasts’.

291 Use of the present subjunctive

A The present subjunctive is used in certain exclamations to express a wish or hope, very often involving supernatural powers:

(God) bless you!  God save the queen!
Heaven help us!  Curse this fog!
Come what may, we’ll stand by you!

Notice also the phrase if need be, which means ‘if it is necessary’:

If need be we can always bring another car.

B It is sometimes used in poetry, either to express a wish or in clauses of condition or concession:

STEVENSON: Fair the day shine as it shone in my childhood. (May the day shine/I hope it will shine.)
SHAKESPEARE: If this be error, and upon me proved ... (if this is error)
BYRON: Though the heart be still as loving ... (though the heart is)

C As seen in 235 certain verbs are followed by should + infinitive constructions. When the infinitive is be, the should is sometimes omitted:

He suggested that a petition (should) be drawn up.

The infinitive thus left alone becomes a subjunctive.
292 **as if/as though + past subjunctive**

The past subjunctive can be used after *as if/as though* to indicate unreality or improbability or doubt in the present (there is no difference between *as if* and *as though*):

- He behaves as if he owned the place. (But he doesn’t own it or probably doesn’t own it or we don’t know whether he owns it or not.)
- He talks as though he knew where she was. (But he doesn’t know or he probably doesn’t know or we don’t know whether he knows or not.)
- He orders me about as if I were his wife. (but I am not)

The verb preceding *as if/though* can be put into a past tense without changing the tense of the subjunctive:

- He talks/talked as though he knew where she was.

After *as if/as though* we use a past perfect when referring to a real or imaginary action in the past:

- He talks about Rome as though he had been there himself. (But he hasn’t or probably hasn’t or we don’t know whether he has or not.)

Again, the verb preceding *as if/though* can be put into a past tense without changing the tense of the subjunctive:

- He looks/looked as though he hadn’t had a decent meal for a month.

293 **it is time + past subjunctive (unreal past)**

*it is time* can be followed by the infinitive:

- It’s time to start

or by *for + object + infinitive*:

- It’s time for us to go

or by *subject + a past subjunctive*:

- It’s time we went. It’s time we were leaving.

There is a slight difference in meaning between the forms. *it is time + infinitive* merely states that the correct time has arrived;

*it is time + subject + past subjunctive* implies that it is a little late.

*high* can be added to emphasize this idea:

- It’s high time we left.

*it is time + I/he/she/it* cannot be followed by *were*:

- It’s time I was going.

(For past subjunctives/unreal pasts in conditional sentences, see 222; after *would rather/sooner*, see 297; after *wish + subject*, see 300; in indirect speech, see 310.)
that ... should after certain verbs

Certain verbs can be followed by that + subject + should as an alternative to a gerund or infinitive construction. that ... should is particularly useful in the passive and sometimes is the only possible passive form.

that ... should is more formal than a gerund or infinitive construction and usually implies less direct contact between the advisers/organizers etc. and the people who are to carry out the action. Verbs which can be used with that ... should include the following: advise, agree, arrange, ask, beg, command, decide, demand, determine, insist, order, propose, recommend, request, stipulate, suggest, urge. Note also: be anxious, be determined.

She advised that we should keep the gate locked.
She advised that the gate should be kept locked.
She advised keeping the gate locked/advised us to keep it locked.

(See 267.)

recommend could be used above instead of advise and would sound more formal.

They agreed/decided that the roof should be repaired.
They agreed/decided to repair the roof.
He arranged that I should go abroad.
He arranged for me to go abroad.
They arranged that the minister should be met at the airport.

They arranged for the minister to be met at the airport.

be anxious (= wish; see 27 C) takes the same construction as arrange:

He is anxious that classes should start/should be started at once. He is anxious for classes to start/to be started at once.
They asked/begged/urged that relief work should be given priority. They asked/begged/urged the authorities to give relief work priority. (See 243.)
He commanded that the army should advance. (He was not necessarily with the army.)
He commanded the army to advance. (He probably was with the army.)
She determined/was determined that he should study music.
She determined/was determined to let him/make him study music.
She insisted that he should study music/insisted on his studying music. (See 262.)
He ordered that Ann should go. (He probably told someone else to tell her.)
He ordered Ann to go. (He probably told her himself.) (See 320.)
He ordered that the goods should be sent by air.
He ordered the goods to be sent by air.
He proposed/suggested that we should try homeopathic remedies. (See 289.)
He proposed/suggested that homeopathic remedies should be tried.
He proposed/suggested (our) trying homeopathic remedies.
They stipulated that the best materials should be used.
They stipulated for the best materials to be used.

should is sometimes omitted before be. (See 291 C.)
9: The subjunctive

The real reason for the existence of the subjunctive is to convey ideas that are not facts. This should be borne in mind throughout our study of the subjunctive.

Kinds of subjunctives

1. The subjunctive in wishes.
   a. Without using any auxiliary verb:
      God save the Queen!
      Devil take you!
      Long live the Queen
      God bless you!
   b. Using may:
      Long may you live to enjoy your retirement.
      Long may the Queen rule over us.
      May you enjoy a ripe old age!

2. The subjunctive of be in unfulfilled or impossible conditionals:
   If she were less plain he might propose to her.
   If he were here all would be well.

3. The subjunctive after propose and suggest, either without an auxiliary verb or with should:
   I suggest he be/should be asked to resign.
   I propose it be/should be done at once.

4. The subjunctive with may or might.
   a. To indicate purpose:
      In order that he might have more time to study, he gave up his job.
   b. In hypotheses, especially when introduced by however, whatever, wherever, etc.
      However poor one may be, one can always find something to be thankful for.
      Whatever may be the results of that policy, I support it on principle.
      He swore to catch up with him, wherever he might be.
      Try as I might, I could not do it.
5. The subjunctive that looks like a simple past tense (unless it is the verb *be*) but isn't, mainly used after certain impersonal constructions, in wishes and suppositions:

*I wish I had my revolver here.*
*I wish I knew how to do it.*
*I wish she were here with me.*
*If only I had more time to think about it.*
*It is time that child went to school.*
*If only he weren't so thick-skinned!*
*I would rather you went home now.*
*I had sooner you didn't tell him.*
*It is high time you learnt to correct that mistake.*
*Suppose he were to ask/asked for the money back at once.*

Sometimes this subjunctive looks like a conditional:
*I wish you would look where you are going!*
*If only he would not eat so much garlic!*

If you are wishing that something had been different in the past, this subjunctive looks like a past perfect tense:
*I wish I had had your opportunities when I was young.*
*If only he had taken my advice years ago!*
*If only he had told you the truth months ago!*

6. The subjunctive with *should*, principally used after expressions of emotion (this is voluntary but gives emphasis to the strength of the emotion), propriety, impropriety, impossibility, command (where no infinitive is used) and suggestion:

*Do you think it right that people should be treated like that?*
*I am shocked that such a thing should have happened here.*
*It is inconceivable that they shouldn't have known about it.*
*She crept in lest her husband should wake up.*
*It is quite wrong that people should be forced to live in such squalor.*
*We are surprised that you should have been treated so rudely.*
*He gave orders that it should be done at once.*
*That he should have behaved like that astounds me.*
EXERCISES

a. Put the verbs in brackets into the right form. Most of them are subjunctives.
1. It is shocking that people (have) to live in such overcrowded slums.
2. If I (be) Prime Minister now I know exactly what I (do).
3. I would really rather you (leave) it until next month.
4. He left orders that nothing (be) touched until the police arrived.
5. If you (live) in London for six months it is time you (know) where Trafalgar Square is.
6. Long you (enjoy) the best of everything.
7. He did it quickly lest he (repent) of it.
8. Whatever (be) the outcome of the election, I (watch) it with interest.
9. It is time he (make) a real effort to settle down.
10. It is scandalous that you (be) treated like that.
11. I suggest he (be) asked to tender his resignation.
12. If only I (behave) differently he might still be alive now.
13. Long you (cling) to your delightful illusions: you never (become) cynical.
14. If he (be) here now, what you (say) to him?
15. I wish I (know) what to say in cases like this.