

Subjonctif - French Subjunctive - Usage

The subjunctive [mood](#) is used to express actions which are **subjective**: will/wanting, emotion, doubt, possibility, necessity, judgment. It is nearly always found in **dependent clauses introduced by que**. The **subjects** of the dependent and main clauses are usually **different**. Remember that "that" is not always required in English.

Je veux que tu le fasses. I want you to do it.

Il faut que nous partions. It is necessary that we leave.

The subjunctive is used when the main clause expresses subjectivity, as with the following cases:

I. Verbs/expressions of **will** which express an [order](#), a need, a piece of advice, or a want.

aimer mieux que to like better / to prefer that

demander que to ask (someone to do something)

désirer que to desire that

donner l'ordre que to order that

empêcher que* to prevent

éviter que* to avoid

exiger que to demand that

ordonner que to order that

préférer que to prefer that

proposer que to propose that

souhaiter que to wish that

suggérer que to suggest that

vouloir que to want that

il est à souhaiter que it is to be hoped

il est essentiel que it is essential

il est important que it is important that

il est naturel que it is natural

il est nécessaire que it is necessary that

il est normal que it is normal that

il est temps que it is time that

il faut que it is necessary that

il est urgent que it is urgent

il vaut mieux que it is better that

II. Verbs/expressions of **emotion or feeling** which indicate fear, happiness, anger, regret, surprise, or other sentiments.

avoir peur que to be afraid that

craindre que to fear that

être content que to be happy that

être désolé que to be sorry that

être étonné que to be amazed that

être heureux que to be happy that

être surpris que to be surprised that

être triste que to be sad that

il est bizarre que it is odd

il est bon que it is good that

il est dommage que it is too bad that

il est étonnant que it is amazing that

il est étrange que it is strange

il est heureux que it is fortunate

il est honteux que it is shameful that

il est inutile que it is useless that

il est rare que it is rare that

il est regrettable que it is regrettable that

il est surprenant que it is surprising

il est utile que it is useful that

regretter que to regret that

*these verbs are followed by the [ne explétif](#):
Évitez qu'il ne parte - Prevent him from leaving.

III. Verbs/expressions of **doubt**, **possibility**, and **opinion**

chercher ... qui	to look for Je cherche un homme qui sache la vérité (he may not exist = doubt)
détester que	to hate
douter que	to doubt
nier que	to deny
il est convenable que	it is proper/fitting
il est douteux que	it is doubtful that
il est faux que	it is false
il est impossible que	it is impossible that
il est improbable que	it is improbable that
il est juste que	it is right/fair
il est possible que	it is possible that
il est peu probable que	it is improbable that
il n'est pas certain que	it is not certain that
il n'est pas clair que	it is not clear that
il n'est pas évident que	it is not obvious that
il n'est pas probable que	it is improbable that
il n'est pas sûr que	it is not certain that
il n'est pas vrai que	it is not true that
il semble que	it seems that
il se peut que	it may be that

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 (Example: Penses-tu qu'il soit sympa ? Oui, je pense qu'il est sympa, Non, je ne pense pas qu'il soit sympa.):

connaître (quelqu'un) qui	to know (someone) that
croire que	to believe that
espérer que	to hope that
être certain que	to be certain that
être sûr que	to be sure that
il est certain que	it is certain that
il est évident que	it is obvious that
il est probable que	it is probable that
il est sûr que	it is certain that
il est vrai que	it is true that
il me (te, lui...) semble que	it seems to me (you, him...) that
penser que	to think that
savoir que	to know that
trouver que	to find/think that

IV. The following conjunctions

à condition que	provided that
à moins que*	unless
afin que	so that
avant que*	before
bien que	although
de crainte que*	for fear that
de peur que*	for fear that
en attendant que	while, until
jusqu'à ce que	until
pour que	so that
pourvu que	provided that
quoique	even though
quoi que	whatever, no matter what
sans que	without

*these conjunctions are followed by the ne explétif:
Mangeons avant que nous ne partions - Let's eat before we leave

Note: the following conjunctions **do not** take the subjunctive, because they express facts which are considered certain:

ainsi que	just as, so as
alors que	while, whereas
après que*	after, when
aussitôt que*	as soon as
car	since, because
en même temps que	at the same time that
depuis que	since
dès que*	as soon as, immediately
lorsque*	when
parce que	because
pendant que	while
plutôt que	instead of, rather than
puisque	since, as
quand*	when
tandis que	while, whereas
une fois que*	once

*These verbs are followed by the future tense.

V. The verbs in sentences with the indefinite pronoun ne ... personne, ne ... rien, quelqu'un, or quelque chose as the subject of the main clause.

VI. Main clauses which contain the words **seul, unique, premier, dernier, or any superlative**

C'est la seule personne que je connaisse.
C'est l'étudiante la plus intelligente que j'aie.

NOTE: There is no future subjunctive. Even if the action is to happen in the future, the present subjunctive is used. However, there is a past subjunctive.

I know it seems overwhelming, but the thing to remember is the subjunctive = subjective. That should help you figure it out at least 90% of the time.