

SUBJUNCTIVE II: OVERVIEW I

Formation and Usage

The **SUBJUNCTIVE II** ("KONJUNKTIV II") is the mood of the verb which is used to express actions or situations that are contrary to actual fact, hypothetical situations which would be true, if conditions were otherwise than they actually are.

Notice the difference between the **INDICATIVE** mood (used to express facts, actions, or situations which really exist) and the **SUBJUNCTIVE** mood in the following examples:

Indicative: (states a fact): John **is** here. You **can** meet him.

Subjunctive: (states something that is contrary to fact):

If John **were** here, you **could** (would be able to) meet him.
(In reality John is not here, so you cannot meet him.)

If only John **were** (would be) here!
(In reality John is not here)

Indicative: I **have** no money. I **will** not **buy** a car.
(This is how things are in reality.)

Subjunctive: If I **had** money, I **would buy** a car.
(This is a hypothetical, contrary-to-fact statement.)

INDICATIVE	SUBJUNCTIVE (Present Tense)
He is rich. She has a car. We can work. Er ist reich. Sie hat ein Auto. Wir können arbeiten.	<i>In English, the present tense subjunctive is formed in either of two ways:</i> 1. from the past tense of the verb, or 2. using would + infinitive: If he 1. were rich, he 2. would be happy. If she 1. had a car, she 2. would have more possibilities. If we 1. could work, we 2. would be able to earn money. <i>In German, the present tense subjunctive is formed the same way:</i> Wenn er reich 1. wäre, 2. würde er glücklich sein. Wenn sie ein Auto 1. hätte, 2. würde sie mehr Möglichkeiten haben. Wenn wir arbeiten 1. könnten, 2. würden wir Geld verdienen können.

(For detailed summary of formation of the Subjunctive II in the present tense, see next page.)

INDICATIVE	SUBJUNCTIVE (Past Tense)
<i>In German, the past tense subjunctive is formed from the present perfect tense of the indicative. All you do is change the "hat" or "ist" to "hätte" or "wäre":</i>	
hat gekauft ist gegangen hat machen können ist gebaut worden	Er hätte ein Auto gekauft ...(He <i>would have bought</i> a car...) Sie wäre nach Hause gegangen ...(She <i>would have gone</i> home...) Er hätte mehr Geld machen können ...(He <i>would have been able to</i> make money...) Das Haus wäre gebaut worden ...(The house <i>would have been built</i> .)

(See the summary of all forms, indicative and subjunctive in the active and passive voices, on Overview II)

Formation of Subjunctive II Present Tense

I. würde + infinitive

The simplest way to form the subjunctive is by using **würde** (the subjunctive of werden) + **infinitive**.

Ich würde arbeiten....	(I would work...)
Du würdest Geld verdienen	(You would earn money...)
Er würde glücklicher sein	(He would be happier..)

However, especially in “if” clauses and other types of subjunctive expressions, the subjunctive is formed from the simple past tense of the indicative, as explained below:

II. Subjunctive II form of Verbs (from simple past of indicative)

A. Weak Verbs (Regular):

Present Tense of Subjunctive II = Simple Past Tense of the Indicative:

Wenn ich ein Auto kaufte	(If I bought a car....)
Wenn ich mehr arbeitete ...	(If I worked more...)
Wenn du mich fragtest	(If you asked me....)

B. Irregular Weak Verbs:

Present Tense of Subjunctive II = Simple Past Tense of Indicative, with umlaut added to stem vowel, if possible)

Wenn ich mehr Zeit hätte ...	(If I had more time...)
Wenn du mir Blumen brächtest	(If you brought me flowers...)
Wenn wir dächten	(If we thought ...)
Wenn er fliegen könnte ...	(If he could . [were able to] fly..)
Wenn sie spielen dürften ...	(If they were allowed to play...)
Wenn du möchtest	(If you would like...)

C. Strong Verbs:

Present Tense of Subjunctive II = Simple Past of Indicative STEM with vowel umlauted

+ endings	
-e	ich wäre , ginge , würde
-est	du wärest , gingest , würdest
-e	er wäre , ginge , würde
-en	wir wären , gingen , würden
-et	ihr wäret , ginget , würdet
-en	sie wären , gingen , würden

Wenn ich reich wäre ..	(If I were rich...)
Wenn du zur Party käme st....	(If you came to the party....)
Wenn sie ihn jetzt sähe ...	(If she saw him now...)

Uses of Subjunctive II

1. Conditional Sentences

Conditional sentences express a hypothetical situation, contrary to fact:

PRESENT TENSE:	Wenn ich [jetzt] Geld hätte , würde ich ein Auto kaufen . (If I had money [now], I would buy a car.)
PAST TENSE:	Wenn ich [damals] Geld gehabt hätte , hätte ich ein Auto gekauft . (If I had had money [then], I would have bought a car.)
PRESENT TENSE:	Wenn ich reich wäre , könnte ich ein Auto kaufen . (If I had money [now], I could [would be able to] buy a car.)
PAST TENSE:	Wenn ich reich gewesen wäre , hätte ich ein Auto kaufen können . (If I had had money, I would have been able to buy a car.)

Note that in the Past Tense, there is no “würde + infinitive” form in German. It is simple “hätte” or “wäre” + past participle. With modals, it is “hätte” + double infinitive.

2. Expressing Wishes

When expressing a wish impossible of fulfillment, an if-clause may stand alone. Generally, **nur** or **doch** is added:

PRESENT TENSE:	Wenn ich nur mehr Zeit hätte ! (If only I had more time!)	Wenn du [es] nur wüsstest ! (If only you knew!)
PAST TENSE:	Wenn ich nur mehr Zeit gehabt hätte ! (If only I had had more time!)	Wenn du nur gewusst hättest ! (If only you had known!)

3. als ob, als wenn

The Subjunctive II is also used after **als ob** or **als wenn**, meaning “as if” or “as though”:

PRESENT TENSE:	Er tat, als ob [als wenn] er schliefe [schlafen würde]. (He acted as if he were sleeping.)
PAST TENSE:	Er tat, als ob [als wenn] er geschlafen hätte . (He acted as if he had slept.)

4. Polite Requests

A request can be made to sound more polite with the use of the Subjunctive II:

Würdest du mir bitte helfen?
(Would you help me please?)
Dürfte ich Sie bitten, mich zu begleiten?
(Might I ask you to accompany me?)

A note about WORD ORDER: In wenn- or als ob / als wenn clauses, the wenn or ob can be dropped and replaced by the subjunctive verb in first position:

Hätte ich mehr Geld, könnte ich ein Auto kaufen.
Er tat, **als hätte** er geschlafen.
Wäre ich nur reich!