

Subjunctive: Part III

In Part I, you learned that the subjunctive mood is used whenever the speaker feels uncertain about the action of the sentence, or when the speaker is expressing a subjective opinion.

In Part II, you learned the basic rules for conjugating regular verbs and stem-changing verbs.

You learned that -ar verbs take the endings:

-e, -es, -e, -emos, -éis, -en

And -er and -ir verbs take the endings:

-a, -as, -a, -amos, -áis, -an

In this lesson you will learn how to conjugate verbs in the present subjunctive that change orthographically.

Remember the old question: What came first, the chicken or the egg? That's a hard one to answer. There's another question, one that pertains to learning Spanish, that's much easier to answer.

Spanish spelling is nearly perfect phonetically. That is, if you can pronounce it, you can spell it, and if you see it written, you can pronounce it. Have you ever asked yourself, "Which came first, the pronunciation or the spelling?" This is a much easier question to answer than the "chicken-egg" question.

The answer is that the pronunciation came first. Later, an alphabet was developed to represent that pronunciation on paper. Fortunately, when the rules for the alphabet were developed, they were kept simple and straightforward. That is why, in Spanish, you can spell any word that you can pronounce, and you can pronounce any word that you see written.

With regard to verb conjugations, these strict rules for spelling often lead to something called "orthographic" changes. These are changes in spelling, changes that are made for one purpose -- to preserve the sound of the infinitive. All of the verbs we discuss in this lesson have orthographic changes.

All of these orthographic changes occur for one reason and one reason only. If we were to simply apply the rules learned in the previous lesson, then we would lose the sound of the infinitive. These orthographic changes ensure that the spelling properly reflects the way these words are actually pronounced.

Remember, pronunciation comes first. Spelling merely reflects the way a word is pronounced. Here are the rules for the orthographic changes in the present subjunctive:

For verbs that end in **-zar**, the z changes to c when it comes before the letter **e**.

empezar (e:ie)

empiece
empieces
empiece
empecemos
empecéis
empiecen

For verbs that end in **-ger** or **-gir**, the g changes to j when it comes before the letter **a**.

escoger

escoja
escojas
escoja
escojamos
escojáis
escojan

elegir (e:i)

elija
elijas
elija
elijamos
elijáis
elijan

For verbs that end in **-guir**, the gu changes to g when it comes before the letter **a**.

seguir (e:i)

sig
sigas
sig
sigamos
sigáis
sigan

For verbs that end in **-car**, the c changes to qu when it comes before the letter **e**.

buscar

busque
busques
busque
busquemos
busquéis
busquen

For verbs that end in -gar, the g changes to gu when it comes before the letter e.

pagar

pague
pagues
pague
paguemos
paguéis
paguen

For verbs that end in uir, add the letter y before the letter a.

huir

huya
huyas
huya
huyamos
huyáis
huyan

There is just one more consideration for conjugating verbs in the present subjunctive. We will cover that in the next lesson.

Let's add flashcards for the verbs that change orthographically in the present subjunctive:

Verb Flashcards

65. **-zar: z changes to c before e**
(present subjunctive)

empezar (e:ie)

empiece
empieces
empiece
empiecemos
empieceís
empiecen

55. **-ger or -gir: g changes to j before a**
(present subjunctive)

escoger

escoja
escojas
escoja
escojamos
escojáis
escojan

56. **-guir: gu changes to g before a**
(present subjunctive)

seguir (e:i)

siga
 sigas
 siga
 sigamos
 sigáis
 sigan

57. **-car: c changes to qu before e**
-gar g changes to gu before e
(present subjunctive)

buscar / pagar

busque / pague
 busques / pagues
 busque / pague
 busquemos / paguemos
 busquéis paguéis
 busquen / paguen

58. **uir: add y before a**
(present subjunctive)

huir

huya
 huyas
 huya
 huyamos
 huyáis
 huyan