

(Also called “El Pretérito Imperfecto del Subjuntivo”)

The **imperfect subjunctive** is used to talk about **hypothetical, uncertain, or emotional actions in the past** — or to express “**if**” **situations** that are not real.

It's the **past form of the subjunctive mood**, used when the **main clause is in the past** or **the situation is contrary to reality**.

## 1) Review: What Is the Subjunctive?

The **subjunctive mood** expresses **wishes, emotions, doubts, recommendations, and uncertainty**, not facts.

<b>Mood</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Indicative</b>	<i>Sé que él viene.</i>	I know he's coming. (certain)
<b>Subjunctive</b>	<i>Dudo que él venga.</i>	I doubt he's coming. (uncertain)
<b>Imperfect Subjunctive</b>	<i>Dudaba que él viniera.</i>	I doubted he was coming. (uncertain in the past)

The **imperfect subjunctive** simply moves the same *subjunctive meaning* into the **past time frame**.

## 2) When to Use the Imperfect Subjunctive

Use the **imperfect subjunctive** when the verb in the main clause is in the **past tense** (preterite, imperfect, conditional, or pluperfect), and you need the **subjunctive** in the dependent clause.

### Formula:

**Main clause (past tense) + que + dependent clause (imperfect subjunctive)**

### Examples:

- *Quería que tú vinieras.* → I wanted you to come.
- *Esperábamos que ellos llegaran temprano.* → We were hoping they'd arrive early.

- *Dudaba que ella tuviera dinero.* → I doubted she had money.
- *Fue triste que no pudieras venir.* → It was sad that you couldn't come.

### 3) How to Form the Imperfect Subjunctive

The formation is **different** from other tenses — but follows a clear pattern:

#### Steps to Form:

- 1 Take the **ellos/ellas/ustedes** form of the **preterite tense**.
- 2 Remove the **-ron** ending.
- 3 Add the **imperfect subjunctive endings**.

#### Endings (Same for -AR, -ER, and -IR verbs)

Person	Ending
yo	<b>-ra</b>
tú	<b>-ras</b>
él/ella/Ud.	<b>-ra</b>
nosotros	<b>-ramos</b>
vosotros	<b>-rais</b>
ellos/ellas/Uds.	<b>-ran</b>

(There's also a less common “-se” set of endings: -se, -ses, -se, -semos, -seis, -sen — used mostly in literature or Spain.)

### 4) Regular Verb Conjugations

#### -AR Example: hablar

Preterite “ellos” form: **hablaron** → **habl-**

Subject	Form
yo	hablara
tú	hablaras
él/ella/Ud.	hablara

nosotros	habláramos
vosotros	hablarais
ellos/ellas/Uds.	hablaran

*Yo quería que tú hablaras conmigo.* → I wanted you to talk with me.

### **-ER Example: comer**

Preterite “ellos” form: **comieron** → **comi-**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Form</b>
yo	comiera
tú	comieras
él/ella/Ud.	comiera
nosotros	comiéramos
vosotros	comierais
ellos/ellas/Uds.	comieran

*Era bueno que comiéramos juntos.* → It was good that we ate together.

### **-IR Example: vivir**

Preterite “ellos” form: **vivieron** → **vivi-**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Form</b>
yo	viviera
tú	vivieras
él/ella/Ud.	viviera
nosotros	viviéramos
vosotros	vivierais
ellos/ellas/Uds.	vivieran

*Dudaba que ellos vivieran cerca.* → I doubted they lived nearby.

## 5) Irregular Stems

Irregular verbs in the **preterite** keep their irregular stems in the **imperfect subjunctive** — you just remove “-ron” and add the endings.

<b>Infinitive</b>	<b>Preterite “ellos”</b>	<b>Stem</b>	<b>Example</b>
decir	dijeron	dij-	<i>dijera, dijeras, dijéramos</i>
estar	estuvieron	estuv-	<i>estuviera, estuviéramos</i>
tener	tuvieron	tuvier-	<i>tuviera, tuviéramos</i>
hacer	hicieron	hic-	<i>hiciera, hiciéramos</i>
poder	podieron	podier-	<i>podiera, pudiéramos</i>
poner	pusieron	pusier-	<i>pusiera, pusiéramos</i>
querer	quisieron	quisier-	<i>quisiera, quisiéramos</i>
saber	supieron	supier-	<i>supiera, supiéramos</i>
venir	vinieron	vinier-	<i>viniera, viniéramos</i>
traer	trajeron	traj-	<i>trajera, trajéramos</i>
dar	dieron	die-	<i>diera, diéramos</i>
ir / ser	fueron	fuer-	<i>fuera, fuéramos</i>
haber	hubieron	hubier-	<i>hubiera, hubiéramos</i>

### Examples:

- *Quería que hicieras la tarea.* → I wanted you to do the homework.
- *Era necesario que estuviéramos allí.* → It was necessary for us to be there.
- *No creían que él viniera.* → They didn't think he came.

## 6) Uses of the Imperfect Subjunctive

### A. To express past wishes, emotions, doubts, or recommendations

<b>Trigger Verb</b>	<b>Example</b>	<b>Translation</b>
querer	<i>Quería que tú vinieras.</i>	I wanted you to come.
esperar	<i>Esperaba que ellos llegaran.</i>	I was hoping they'd arrive.
dudar	<i>Dudaba que él tuviera dinero.</i>	I doubted he had money.

recomendar      *Nos recomendaron que fuéramos al médico.*      They recommended that we go to the doctor.

## B. After “si” (if) clauses for hypotheticals

Structure:

**Si + imperfect subjunctive → conditional**

**Examples:**

- *Si tuviera dinero, viajaría por el mundo.* → If I had money, I would travel the world.
- *Si pudiera, te ayudaría.* → If I could, I would help you.
- *Si supieras la verdad, no dirías eso.* → If you knew the truth, you wouldn't say that.

The imperfect subjunctive expresses the **unreal condition**, and the **conditional** expresses the **imagined result**.

## C. After past expressions of emotion, doubt, influence, or necessity

**Examples:**

- *Fue una lástima que no pudieras venir.* → It was a shame you couldn't come.
- *Tenía miedo de que se perdieran.* → I was afraid they might get lost.
- *Era importante que estudiáramos.* → It was important that we studied.

## D. To express politeness or soft requests (especially with “querer,” “poder,” “deber”)

**Examples:**

- *Quisiera una mesa para dos, por favor.* → I would like a table for two, please.
- *Pudiera hablar con el director?* → Could I speak with the principal?
- *Debieras estudiar más.* → You ought to study more.

This use overlaps with the **conditional** for polite or hypothetical tone.

## 7) Accent Reminder: Nosotros Form

All **nosotros** forms in the imperfect subjunctive carry an **accent mark** on the vowel before the -ramos ending:

- habláramos
- comiéramos
- viviéramos
- tuviéramos
- dijéramos

*Esperábamos que llegáramos a tiempo.* → We were hoping we'd arrive on time.

## 8) Practice: Fill in the Blanks

Conjugate the verbs in parentheses in the **imperfect subjunctive**.

1. Quería que tú \_\_\_\_\_ (venir) conmigo.
2. No creían que nosotros \_\_\_\_\_ (tener) razón.
3. Era importante que ella \_\_\_\_\_ (estudiar).
4. Si yo \_\_\_\_\_ (poder), iría contigo.
5. Esperábamos que ustedes \_\_\_\_\_ (llegar) temprano.
6. Fue una lástima que no \_\_\_\_\_ (haber) más tiempo.

### Answers:

1. vinieras
2. tuviéramos
3. estudiara
4. pudiera
5. llegaran
6. hubiera

## 9) Practice: Translate

1. I wanted you to do it.
2. We hoped they would arrive early.
3. If I were rich, I would buy a house.

4. It was necessary that you studied.
5. I didn't think they came.

**Answers:**

1. Quería que lo hicieras.
2. Esperábamos que llegaran temprano.
3. Si fuera rico, compraría una casa.
4. Era necesario que estudiaras.
5. No creía que vinieran.

## 10) Common Pitfalls & Fixes

<b>Wrong</b>	<b>Correct</b>	<b>Why</b>
<i>Quería que tú vienes.</i>	<i>Quería que tú vinieras.</i>	Past trigger → imperfect subjunctive.
<i>Si tengo dinero, viajaría.</i>	<i>Si tuviera dinero, viajaría.</i>	Hypothetical → imperfect subjunctive.
<i>Espero que fuiste.</i>	<i>Esperaba que fueras.</i>	Past hope → imperfect subjunctive.
<i>Si sería rico, compraría un coche.</i>	<i>Si fuera rico, compraría un coche.</i>	"If" clause always subjunctive, not conditional.

## 11) Quick Summary Chart

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Formula / Use</b>	<b>Example</b>
Formation	Ellos preterite - "ron" + ra endings	<i>hablaron → hablara</i>
Endings	-ra, -ras, -ra, -ramos, -rais, -ran	<i>comiera, viviéramos</i>
Main clause in past	+ que + imperfect subjunctive	<i>Quería que vinieras.</i>
Hypothetical si clause	<i>Si + imperfect subjunctive → conditional</i>	<i>Si tuviera dinero, viajaría.</i>
Politeness	with <i>querer, poder, deber</i>	<i>Quisiera un café.</i>
Nosotros form	accent before "-ramos"	<i>estuviéramos</i>

# Why the Imperfect Subjunctive Matters

The **imperfect subjunctive**:

- Allows you to express **past uncertainty, emotion, or desire**
- Enables you to use **“if” clauses** and **hypothetical speech** naturally
- Connects directly with the **conditional tense**
- Appears frequently in **stories, news, and polite requests**

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