



When to Use the Subjunctive Mood in French

KS4 FRENCH

GRAMMAR

Ages 14-16 ⌚ 3 min read

What is the Subjunctive Mood?

The **subjunctive mood** is a special way of conjugating verbs in **French** (and many other languages). Unlike the normal form of verbs you use every day, the subjunctive is used when we're not talking about something that's definitely true or happening. Instead, it expresses wishes, doubts, possibilities, and emotions.

Think of it like the difference between saying "I know she's coming to the party" (definite) and "I hope she comes to the party" (uncertain). The subjunctive is the grammar tool for that uncertain version.

When Do You Use It?

You use the subjunctive mood after certain **trigger phrases** that show doubt, desire, necessity, or emotion. The most common triggers include:

Doubt and uncertainty: "Je doute que..." (I doubt that...), "Il est possible que..." (It's possible that...). When you're not sure about something, the subjunctive kicks in.

Desire and necessity: "Je veux que..." (I want that...), "Il faut que..." (It is necessary that...). When someone wants something to happen or when something must happen, use the subjunctive.

Emotion: "Je suis heureux que..." (I'm happy that...), "C'est dommage que..." (It's a shame that...). When you're expressing feelings about a situation, the subjunctive applies.

Think of it like a warning light on a dashboard. When you see certain phrases, they're like a red light telling you: "Switch to subjunctive mode now!"

A Practical Example

Compare these two sentences: "Elle est malade" (She is ill) uses the normal mood because it's a fact. But "Je crains qu'elle soit malade" (I fear that she is ill) uses the

subjunctive because it expresses worry and uncertainty.

The subjunctive is tricky because the verb **endings change** in unusual ways. For example, the verb "être" (to be) becomes "je sois, tu sois, il soit" in the subjunctive, which looks quite different from the regular form.

Why Does It Matter?

Using the subjunctive correctly shows you understand **nuanced French** and can express complex ideas. It's an important part of sounding like a native speaker and passing your **GCSE French exam**. With practice, recognising the trigger phrases becomes automatic, and using the subjunctive feels natural.