

GRAMMAR B1 EINHEIT 5

In this unit you are introduced to the subjunctive, specifically subjunctive II (*KonjunktivII*). The primary, although certainly not the only, function of the subjunctive is to express conditions contrary to fact or reality, in other words wishes and dreams.

For us probably the most well known example of the subjunctive is from the musical, *ÖFiddler on the Roof*. The song goes, *ÖIf I were a rich man I wouldí .ö* It is clear from the text that the person singing is not rich (condition contrary to fact) and will not be doing all those things that are premised on his being rich. How do we know that sentence is subjunctive? What tense is the verb? What tense is the sentence?

The verb is clearly in the past tense. Nonetheless, it refers to a present tense condition. The speaker is currently not rich. That's the way it is with conditional (subjunctive II) sentences. *ÖIfö plus a past tense verb indicates a present tense subjunctive II sentence. Past tense subjunctive II sentences require the use of the past perfect tense- ÖIf I had been rich I would have spent my money on trees.ö* This means that at some time in the past you weren't rich and didn't spend your money on trees.

Fortunately for us, German functions in the very same way. You use the past tense to express the present tense of a conditional (subjunctive II) sentence. Likewise, a form of the past perfect tense is used to indicate past subjunctive II.

The subjunctive II in German has another very important similarity with English. In English we can use the past tense form of the verb or *Öwouldö plus the infinitive. ÖI would eat if I had time.ö* You won't be eating because you don't have time. We've already seen that when used in conjunction with *Öifö* the past tense form of the verb means a condition contrary to fact in the present. The same is true of *Öwouldö plus the infinitive. ÖI would eatö means you won't be eating in the present. The same is true in German. In fact, for most verbs you would use *würde* plus an infinitive to indicate present tense subjunctive. *Ich würde essen, wenn ich Zeit hätte. ÖI would eat if I had time.*"*

It is important that you now recognize that in certain grammatical contexts *Öwould eatö = Öateö or Öwould goö = Öwentö. As has already been explained, in German, the present tense of subjunctive II is *würde* plus the infinitive or a form of the past. What is this Öform of the pastö? For verbs with regular past tense forms it is simply the past tense form. *Wenn er spielte = Wenn er spielen würde.* For irregular past tense forms, you take the past tense form, add an umlaut when possible, and then add your subjunctive endings. The endings are *ich-e, du-est, er-e, wir-en, ihr-et, sie-en.**

<i>ich</i>	<i>ginge</i>	<i>gäbe</i>	<i>spielte</i>	<i>wir</i>	<i>gingen</i>	<i>gäben</i>	<i>spielten</i>
<i>du</i>	<i>gingest</i>	<i>gäbest</i>	<i>spieltest</i>	<i>ihr</i>	<i>ginget</i>	<i>gäbet</i>	<i>spieltet</i>
<i>er</i>	<i>ginge</i>	<i>gäbe</i>	<i>spielte</i>	<i>sie</i>	<i>gingen</i>	<i>gäben</i>	<i>spielten</i>

In spoken German today, you use the *würde* + infinitive form for all verbs except the modals, *sein*, *haben*, *wissen*, and *geben*. *Sein* and *geben* are true irregular verbs and follow the rule governing irregular forms perfectly. *Sollen* and *wollen* are the only modals that don't use an umlaut anywhere in the present tense and are likewise the only ones that don't use an umlaut in subjunctive II. The other modals, *haben*, and *wissen* add an umlaut to their past tense forms to indicate present subjunctive.

<i>ich</i>	<i>wollte</i>	<i>sollte</i>	<i>könnte</i>	<i>dürfte</i>	<i>müsste</i>	<i>hätte</i>	<i>wüsste</i>	<i>gäbe</i>
<i>du</i>	<i>wolltest</i>	<i>solltest</i>	<i>könntest</i>	<i>dürftest</i>	<i>müsstest</i>	<i>hättest</i>	<i>wüsstest</i>	<i>gäbest</i>
<i>er</i>	<i>wollte</i>	<i>sollte</i>	<i>könnte</i>	<i>dürfte</i>	<i>müsste</i>	<i>hätte</i>	<i>wüsste</i>	<i>gäbe</i>
<i>wir</i>	<i>wollten</i>	<i>sollten</i>	<i>könnten</i>	<i>dürften</i>	<i>müssten</i>	<i>hätten</i>	<i>wüssten</i>	<i>gäben</i>
<i>ihr</i>	<i>wolltet</i>	<i>solltet</i>	<i>könntet</i>	<i>dürftet</i>	<i>müsstet</i>	<i>hättet</i>	<i>wüsstet</i>	<i>gäbet</i>
<i>sie</i>	<i>wollten</i>	<i>sollten</i>	<i>könnten</i>	<i>dürften</i>	<i>müssten</i>	<i>hätten</i>	<i>wüssten</i>	<i>gäben</i>

The subjunctive II forms have three main uses. One is to make a polite request (*höfliche Bitte*). *Könntest du bitte das Fenster schließen, mir ist kalt. Würden Sie vielleicht etwas leiser sprechen, das ist eine Bibliothek.*

Another is to give advice (*Ratschlag*) ó *Du könntest ruhig ein bisschen höflicher sein. Es ist schließlich deine Deutschlehrerin.*

To give a polite command (*Aufforderung*) ó *Du solltest mal wieder deine Schuhe putzen, findest du nicht?*

To make a suggestion (*Vorschlag*) ó *Wir könnten doch mal wieder nach Hamburg fahren, oder?*

Finally, the subjunctive II is used to express wishes (*Wünsche*) or dreams (*Träume*).

These often take the form of so-called *öifí thenö* clauses. It is not uncommon in English or German to leave *then/dann* out of the sentence. *Wenn ich Zeit hätte, würde ich dich besuchen. Ich würde am liebsten im Bett bleiben. (Aber ich muss in die Schule gehen).*

So what would you do if you were a rich man? *Wenn ich ein reicher Mann wäre, würde ich den ganzen Tag mit meinem Hund und einem guten Buch in der Natur verbringen..*

Although not covered in this unit, let's briefly look at the formation of the past tense of subjunctive II. This is used to describe an unreal condition in the past. Fortunately, both German and English use the past perfect tense to do this. *öIf I had gone to the movies, I wouldn't have had the accident.ö Wenn ich ins Kino gegangen wäre, hätten ich den Unfall nicht gehabt.* You use the subjunctive form of the appropriate helping verb (*haben* or *sein*) combined with the past participle. With modal verbs the helping verb is always a form of *hätte* and because you use a double infinitive instead of a past participle. *Wenn ich Zeit gehabt hätte, hätte ich ins Kino gehen können.*

The other point of grammar is accusative and dative word order when dealing with direct and indirect objects. Remember, if the direct object is a pronoun it precedes the indirect object. Otherwise it follows it.

*Ich schenke meiner Freundin eine Rose. Ich schenke ihr eine Rose.
Ich schenke sie meiner Freundin. Ich schenke sie ihr.*

