

Lesson Plan: Subjunctive mood

Level	Advanced (C1–C2)
Time	60–90 minutes
Skills	Grammar, writing
Focus	Formal subjunctive (mandative, formulaic) in written and spoken English

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand when and why the subjunctive mood is used in English
- Use the mandative subjunctive correctly: suggest that / recommend that / it is essential that + base form
- Recognise fixed subjunctive expressions in formal English
- Produce formal written English using the subjunctive appropriately

TARGET LANGUAGE (EXAMPLES)

Mandative subjunctive — verb triggers

- suggest / recommend / insist / propose / request / demand + that + subject + base verb (no -s, no auxiliary)
- The committee recommends that the report be submitted by Friday.
- I suggest that she attend the meeting in person.
- The doctor insisted that he rest for a week.

Adjective triggers

- It is essential / vital / important / necessary / imperative that...
- It is essential that all staff be informed.
- It is vital that he understand the risks.

Fixed/formulaic expressions

- Be that as it may...
- Come what may...
- Far be it from me to...
- Suffice it to say...
- God save the King. / Long live the Republic.

AmE vs. BrE

- American English uses the subjunctive more freely.
- British English often uses should + infinitive as an alternative: 'I suggest that she should attend.'
- Both are correct, but the subjunctive sounds more formal.

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up (10 min)

Task: Students notice the difference: 'I suggest he attends' vs. 'I suggest he attend.'

- Can they explain what's different? Why might one feel more formal?

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: Mandative subjunctive: triggers, form, function.

- The base verb looks the same as infinitive: be, have, do — no conjugation.
- Common error: adding -s or using was: 'The report suggests that she was...' → different meaning.

3. Guided practice (10 min)

Task: Rewrite using the mandative subjunctive.

- 'She should update her CV.' + I recommend → 'I recommend that she update her CV.'
- 'All employees must wear ID.' + It is compulsory → ...

4. Writing task (25 min)

Task: Write a formal memo or letter of recommendation using mandative subjunctive at least 4 times.

- Peer review: is the form correct? Does it match the register?

5. Error correction (5–10 min)

Task: Fix 5 errors where subjunctive is required but not used.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one:

1. Write a formal policy document using the mandative subjunctive at least 5 times.
2. Rewrite 6 informal suggestions as formal recommendations using the subjunctive.
3. Find 5 examples of the subjunctive in formal texts and explain their triggers.