

The subjunctive mood

The subjunctive mood has several uses. It can be used to express a wish or desire.

God save the King!

Heaven help us.

God forbid that such a thing should happen.

These are some fixed phrases expressing a solemn wish and the verb is used in the subjunctive mood.

The subjunctive mood is also used in other expressions of a wish or desire.

I wish I were better looking.

I wish he were dead.

O that I were young once again!

The subjunctive mood can be used to express a purpose.

Judge not that ye be not judged.

We eat that we may live.

Let him take heed lest he fall.

Work hard that you may succeed.

The subjunctive mood can also be used to express a doubtful condition or possibility.

If you could do this we should be so grateful.

If he should arrive before Christmas, how happy we would be.

A condition or supposition contrary to fact

If it were possible, I would do it.

If I were you, I wouldn't let him go.

I wish he were present with us now.

You talk as if you were God Almighty.

Conjunctions like *if* which connect these adverb clauses are often omitted. In this case, we use an inverted word order. That means the verb in the adverb clause goes before the subject.

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Were it possible, I would do it.