

Konjunktiv

The **Konjunktiv** (subjunctive) is a verb mood, not a verb tense.

It is telling you that a statement is not just a plain fact (the "indicative"), but either an (indirect) quotation or a hypothetical situation.

There are two forms: Konjunktiv I and Konjunktiv II.

Konjunktiv I (Indirect quotes)

Konjunktiv I is mostly used for indirect quotations (indirect speech, *indirekte Rede*).

In modern German it is mainly used in writing: news stories on radio and TV and in the newspaper. Therefore, it is not necessary for most foreigners speaking German to learn how to produce it, rather to recognise it.

USES

☼ Konjunktiv I is telling you that someone said something that may or may not be true.

For instance: "Der Nachbar sagte, die Dame **lebe** schon länger im Dorf."

The normal present tense conjugation is "die Dame lebt," but the subjunctive form "die Dame lebe" tells us that this is what someone said. It says in effect: that's what we were told but we can't vouch for it. (News reporters like using this, as they are not responsible for something someone else said.)

☼ The Subjunctive I is also used in technical writing, slogans, in directions or recipes:

Technical: "Hier **sei** nur vermerkt, dass..."

Recipe: "Man **nehme** 100 Gramm Zucker, zwei Eier..."

Slogan: "Es **lebe** der König!"

CONJUGATION

There are lists of full subjunctive conjugations, but in practice you really only need to know the third person singular forms most of the time. (This is because we usually quote a third person!)

In third person singular the verb gets an **-e** ending (except for "to be") rather than the normal **-t**.

er habe
er komme
sie wisse

Exeption: The Konjunktiv I für "sie ist" is

sie sei

RECOGNISE IT!

Examples:

haben	to have (infinitive)
er hat	he has (3rd person indicative)
er habe	(he says) he has (Subjunctive I, quotative)

gehen	to go (infinitive)
er geht	he goes (3rd person indicative)
er gehe	(he says) he has (Subjunctive I, quotative)

sein	to be (infinitive)
sie ist	she is (3rd person indicative)
sie sei	(she says) she is (Subjunctive I, quotative)

arbeiten	to work (infinitive)
er arbeitet	he works (3rd person indicative)
er arbeite	(he says) he works (Subjunctive I, quotative)

können	to be able, can (infinitive)
er kann	he can (3rd person indicative)
er könne	(he says) he can/could (Subjunctive I, quotati

OTHER TENSES

Since the Konjunktiv I is a verb mood, it can be used in any tense, present, past, or future. To form the various tenses in the subjunctive, the verbs *haben*, *sein*, and *werden* (in their subjunctive forms) are used to form a compound tense.

Here are a few examples:

Er sagte, er schreibe den Brief.

He said he's writing the letter. (present tense)

Er sagte, er habe den Brief geschrieben.

He said he wrote the letter. (past tense)

Er sagte, er werde den Brief schreiben.

He said he will write the letter. (future tense)

Sie sagte, sie fahre nach Hong Kong.

She said she's traveling to Hong Kong. (present tense)

Sie sagte, sie sei nach Hong Kong gefahren.

She said she traveled to Hong Kong. (past tense)

Konjunktiv II (hypothetical situations)

The Konjunktiv II is used for hypothetical situations.

It is usually formed by adding an *Umlaut* (¨) to the vowel (a, o, or u ONLY) in the imperfect (simple past) form of the verb... and adding an **-e** (if there isn't one already; **-en** in the plural).

Examples:

haben	to have (infinitive)
hatte	had (imperfect, simple past)
hätte	would have/had (Subjunctive II)

mögen	to like (infinitive)
mochte	liked (imperfect, simple past)
möchte	would like (Subjunctive II)

gehen	to go (infinitive)
ging	went (imperfect, simple past)
ginge	would go/gone (Subjunctive II)

sein	to be (infinitive)
war	was (imperfect, simple past)
wäre	would be/were (Subjunctive II)

Exception: The modals *sollen* and *wollen* do NOT add an umlaut in the subjunctive (ich wollte, ich sollte).

THE "WÜRDE" + INFINITIVE SUBSTITUTION

Although technically every German verb has a subjunctive form, in practice a substitution is preferred using **würde + Infinitive**:

instead of **ginge** (would go) **würde gehen** (would go).

Wenn das Wetter schön wäre, **gingen** wir zum Strand.

Wenn das Wetter schön wäre, **würden** wir zum Strand **gehen**.

This is never used for **haben**, **sein** and the modal verbs. Here the Konjunktiv II forms must be used:

ich/er	Du	wir/sie	Ihr
hätte	Hättest	Hätten	Hättet
wäre	Wärest	wären	Wäret
dürfte	Dürftest	dürften	Dürftet
könnte	Könntest	könnten	könntet
müßte	Müßttest	müßten	müßtet
sollte	Solltest	sollten	solltet
wollte	Wolltest	wollten	wolltet
würde	Würdest	würden	würdet

OTHER TENSES

The Subjunctive II is a verb mood, not a tense. The subjunctive can be used in any tense, present, past, or future. To form the various tenses in the subjunctive, the verbs *haben*, *sein*, and *werden* (in their subjunctive forms) are used to form a compound tense.

Here are a few examples:

Hättest du Lust, mit uns zu gehen?

Do you feel like going with us? (present tense)

Ich wäre gern mit euch gegangen.

I would have liked to go with you guys. (past tense)

Wenn sie kein Geld gehabt hätte, wäre sie nicht nach Asien gefahren.

If she had not had the money, she wouldn't have gone to Asia. (past)

Ich würde es kaufen, wenn...

I would buy it if... (future/conditional)