

AVOIDING THE SUBJUNCTIVE



Grammar topic: Ways to avoid using the subjunctive

Curriculum: French Level B2

The French subjunctive is very commonly used both in spoken and in written French, but there are some ways you can avoid using it.

Use indirect object pronouns with «falloir»

This is a particularly simple way of avoiding the French subjunctive when using the expression “il faut que”. All you have to do is use an indirect object pronoun before “faut”, take off “que”, and add an infinitive.

ME - TE - LUI - NOUS - VOUS - LEUR

She has to be on time.

Il faut qu'elle soit à l'heure. (subjunctive - soit)

Il lui faut être à l'heure. (indirect object pronoun - lui)

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Use SI instead of QUE

This trick will only work if you're expressing doubt:

I am not sure if he wants to come.

Je ne suis pas sûr(e) qu'il veuille venir. (subjunctive - veuille)

Je ne suis pas sûr(e) s'il veut venir. (indicative - veut)

Remove a subject, and use an infinitive instead

I am coming so that you can rest.

Je viens pour que tu puisses te reposer. (subjunctive - puisses)

Je viens pour te permettre de te reposer. (infinitive - permettre)

Don't be so negative!

Only works with penser, croire, trouver, savoir, prétendre

I don't think you want to go out this evening.

Je ne crois pas que tu veilles sortir ce soir. (subjunctive - veilles)

Je crois que tu ne veux sortir ce soir. (indicative - veux)

IL FAUT: Drop QUE, Add Infinitive

I have to finish this book.

Il faut que je finisse ce livre. (subjunctive - finisse)

Il (me) faut finir ce livre. (infinitive - finir)

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IMPERSONAL EXPRESSIONS: Drop QUE, Add DE + Infinitive

It's a shame you're missing the concert.

C'est dommage que vous manquiez le concert. (subjunctive - manquez)

C'est dommage de manquer le concert. (de + infinitive - manquer)

Use the verb DEVOIR + INFINITIVE instead of IL FAUT

My husband has to go to Paris next week.

Il faut que mon mari aille à Paris la semaine prochaine.
(subjunctive - aille)

Mon mari doit aller à Paris la semaine prochaine. (indicative - doit)

THE SUBJUNCTIVE IS STILL VERY IMPORTANT

You've learned some of the ways that the indicative can easily replace the subjunctive, but you still need to know it.

It's important to remember that the meaning slightly changes in some cases when using the indicative, and also to know that the subjunctive really is used in everyday French.

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