

Sick Notes

Level: Upper-Intermediate

Objective – To use the present subjunctive for commands, requests, and insistence.
Listening and Speaking Practice
Reported speech
With minor changes this lesson could also be used for noun clause reductions to infinite clauses in reported speech.

Materials – Worksheet 1 & 2

Warm-up – Begin by asking the class if they have ever missed class. Put them in groups of two and tell them to talk about a time or times that they missed class and why this was so. Then have them report to the class what their partner said. Note some good examples of reported speech, but don't correct anybody at this point.

Pre-task – Ask the students what they should do if they miss class (get the homework, notes, and lesson topics from fellow classmates). Now tell the class that you will give a brief 5-minute grammar lesson on reported speech. Make sure to include some homework and ask the class to bring in some examples of reported speech from home for the next class. They should take some notes and remember as much as they can.

Now have the students imagine that a fellow classmate missed this lesson and they must tell him or her about it including the homework and request to bring in some examples. Do some examples with the class and ask them if there is a way to report something using the sentence "It's important that...". If you're really lucky, someone will come up with a phrase like "It's very important that the verb *be backshifted*" or "The teacher requested that we *bring in* an example from outside the class." These are examples of the subjunctive. Now put the class in pairs and have them report to each other the contents of the lesson. Make sure to take notes and especially to record any examples of the subjunctive used to look at afterwards.

Go over good examples and any useful phrases the students came up with. Hand out worksheet 1 and have the class highlight any useful phrases and examples of the subjunctive in use. As a class analyze the grammar and give some incorrect examples (most likely the students have given plenty of bad examples for you to use from the previous task).

Main task – Tell the students that they are working at a company and they've just gotten a new manager. This manager had a very important meeting yesterday to introduce himself and provide everyone with his expectations and rules. Unfortunately there is a bad flu going around and many people were sick. Their job is to report the contents of the meeting to the employees who were sick. To verify this information, the student who was listening will have to repeat it to the other student.

Have half the class leave the room. Read worksheet 2 while the remaining students take notes.

Call the half that left back in and pair them up with students who remained. The students who took notes should then report the information to the students who left (hopefully using the subjunctive where appropriate). After this, have them change partners, compare notes and outline a report to give to the class using reported speech and the subjunctive where appropriate.

Note: If the class is having difficulty or is rather weak, the listening could also be done as a reading.

Worksheet 1

Dialogue - Subjunctive

Jim: Hello?

Mark: Hello, is this Jim?

Jim: This is.

Mark: Hi Jim, it's Mark, from English class.

Jim: Oh, hi Mark. What's up?

Mark: Well, I was wondering if you could help me out. I missed class on Monday because my brother was sick and I had to take care of him. Could you tell me what we learned in class?

J: Oh sure, no problem. We learned about reported speech. You know, like when a person says something and then you tell someone else what they said.

M: Oh yeah, got it. I remember learning about it in high school, but I don't remember what we're supposed to do.

J: Alright, well basically Mr. Kaplan said that it's really important that the verb be backshifted.

M: Backshifted? What's that?

J: You know, like when the person says something in present simple you have to report it with the past simple.

M: Oh right. I remember now. You mean like when someone says, "It's my birthday." I have to say that *he said it was his birthday*.

J: Right, you got it. Obviously you remembered that the pronoun must be changed as well. Mr. Kaplan also said that that was important. The second thing he mentioned is that the time should be changed. For example, if the person says "today" you should say "that day" in reported speech.

M: Gotcha. Another example would be "now" changes to "then".

J: Exactly.

M: So let me see if I got this. Basically it's important that the verb be backshifted, the pronoun be changed, and that the time be changed.

J: Yep, you got it. Mr. Kaplan also insisted that we use and practice this in class. He said that many students know about reported speech, but that they never actually use it.

M: Ha, funny. I think that's our biggest problem. We know all the grammar, but we never use it. He's definitely got a point there. What about homework or anything?

J: Oh yeah, I was gonna mention that. Mr. Kaplan requested that we bring in some examples of reported speech from a magazine or the Internet or something like that.

M: Ok, sounds good. Thanks for helping me out with this. Anything else I should know?

J: Nope, that about wraps it up. I guess I'll see you in class on Friday then, right?

M: Yep, see you then and thanks again. Bye.

J: Bye.

Worksheet 1
Dialogue – Infinitive Clauses

Jim: Hello?

Mark: Hello, is this Jim?

Jim: This is.

Mark: Hi Jim, it's Mark, from English class.

Jim: Oh, hi Mark. What's up?

Mark: Well, I was wondering if you could help me out. I missed class on Monday because my brother was sick and I had to take care of him. Could you tell me what we learned in class?

J: Oh sure. No problem. We learned about reported speech. You know, like when a person says something and then you tell someone else what they said.

M: Oh yeah, got it. I remember learning about it in high school, but I don't remember what we're supposed to do.

J: Alright, well basically Mr. Kaplan said that the first thing to do is to backshift the verb.

M: Backshift? What's that?

J: You know, like when the person says something in present simple you have to report it with the past simple.

M: Oh right. I remember now. You mean like when someone says, "It's my birthday." I have to say that *he said it was his birthday*.

J: Right, you got it. Obviously you remembered that the pronoun must be changed as well. Mr. Kaplan also said that that was important. He also mentioned that the time should be changed. For example, if the person says "today" you should say "that day" in reported speech.

M: Gotchya. Another example would be "now" changes to "then".

J: Exactly.

M: So let me see if I got this. Basically he said to backshift the verb, change the pronoun, and change the time.

J: Yep, you got it. Mr. Kaplan said to use and practice this in class. He said that many students know about reported speech, but that they never actually use it.

M: Ha, funny. I think that's our biggest problem. We know all the grammar, but we never use it. He's definitely got a point there. What about homework or anything?

J: Oh yeah, I was gonna mention that. Mr. Kaplan asked us to bring in some examples of reported speech from a magazine or the Internet or something like that.

M: Ok, sounds good. Thanks for helping me out with this. Anything else I should know?

J: Nope, that about wraps it up. I guess I'll see you in class on Friday then, right?

M: Yep, see you then and thanks again. Bye.

J: Bye.

Worksheet 2
Manager's Speech

Manager: Hello everyone and thank you for coming today. My name is Ron Pierce and I am your new manager. Just a little about myself: I'm 45 years old, married, and have 3 children, all of whom have graduated from university already. I've worked in this industry for my entire adult life and was previously the manager over at Bemis Inc., you may have heard of it. I take pride in my work and I expect you to do the same. I don't expect anything from my employees that I don't expect from myself. You will find that I am a competent and fair in my dealings with customers as well as with my employees.

So, getting on to what I expect from you. You all need to come on time, of course. Nothing new there. I also want all employees to dress properly. Women, no low-cut blouses or mini-skirts and men, ties and suits please. In addition to this, no long hair or jewellery for the men.

Also, starting next week - and this is very important – every Monday you should fill out a report detailing your goals for the week and email it to me. I'd like you all to include the title of the project you are working on and how far along you are in this report. This will help me monitor our projects and plan for the future.

Let's see. Complaints. If you have a complaint about another employee, a customer, or anything else at all it needs to be directed to Mr. Jones, our Human Resources Director. Here I must insist – inform Mr. Jones, or, if you feel the matter is more urgent, myself as soon as the problem arises. I don't want any problems to be left unresolved.

I think that about covers it. Otherwise, it's business as usual. Alright then, any questions for me . . .