

Using Verb Moods

WHAT IS A VERB MOOD?

The mood of a sentence is determined by the inflection of the verb. A verb may be in one of three moods: indicative, imperative, or subjunctive.

Indicative Mood

The indicative mood is the most common and is used to express factual statements or positive beliefs. The following are examples of verbs in the indicative mood:

She is the best professor at Monmouth University.
I enjoy reading books.

Imperative Mood

The imperative mood is used to express direct commands, requests, and prohibitions. The subject of a verb in the imperative mood is always second-person “you” understood. The following are examples of verbs in the imperative mood:

Get over here right now!
Write your name at the top of the paper.

Subjunctive Mood

The subjunctive mood is used in dependent clauses when such clauses are expressing hypothetical situations or conditions which are unlikely or contrary to fact. These clauses usually begin with *if*, *as if*, or *as though*. Verbs in the subjunctive mood take on the third-person plural form. The following are examples of verbs in the subjunctive mood:

If I were you, I would start studying immediately.
(Here, it is implied that I *am not* you.)
The grown dog acted as if it were a puppy.
(Here, it is implied that the grown dog *is not* a puppy.)
They treated her as though she were a queen.
(Here, it is implied that she *is not* a queen.)

The subjunctive mood is also used in dependent clauses which express uncertainties, such as wishes, requests, or suggestions. These clauses sometimes begin with *that*. The following are examples of verbs in the subjunctive mood:

She wishes that she were home instead of at school. (wish)
The school requests that everyone submit his or her form. (request)
I suggest that he arrive on time for the awards ceremony. (suggestion)

Note: For information on voice, please refer to the skills page on Active and Passive Voice.