



# Coffee Break French

## Season 3, Lesson 16

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# Lesson 16 Notes

In this episode we're taking a break from the texts from Alf, Katie and Veronica and consolidating what we've learned so far about the subjunctive. We'll focus on the triggers which we've covered so far in the course, and provide some further examples of triggers which require the subjunctive.

## FORMATION OF THE SUBJUNCTIVE: REGULAR VERBS

Remember that the subjunctive is formed by taking the third person plural (the **ils** or **elles** form) of the present tense, taking off the **-ent** ending, and adding the following endings:

present subjunctive endings (regular verbs)	
(je) <b>-e</b>	(nous) <b>-ions</b>
(tu) <b>-es</b>	(vous) <b>-iez</b>
(il) <b>-e</b>	(ils) <b>-ent</b>

With **-er** verbs this means that there is, in fact, very little change: the present subjunctive of **parler** is very similar to the present indicative of **parler**. The only two forms which change in an **-er** verb are the **nous** and **vous** forms.

parler (to speak) - PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE	
je parle	nous parlions
tu parles	vous parliez
il parle	ils parlent

However, with **-ir** and **-re** verbs, we notice more of a change. Consider the verbs **finir** and **vendre** below:

finir (to finish) - PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE	
je finisse	nous finissions
tu finisses	vous finissiez
il finisse	ils finissent

vendre (to sell) - PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE	
je vende	nous vendions
tu vendes	vous vendiez
il vende	ils vendent

So if we compare, for example, the **je** form of **finir** in the present indicative (**je finis**) and in the present subjunctive (**je finisse**) we can see that there is a significant difference. The same happens with **vendre**: **je vends** (indicative) and **je vende** (subjunctive).

## FORMATION OF THE SUBJUNCTIVE: IRREGULAR VERBS

There are a number of verbs which follow different patterns in the subjunctive. We've already come across a few of these verbs. Tap on the play button beneath each verb to listen to the verb with a musical accompaniment.

être (to be) - PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE	
je sois	nous soyons
tu sois	vous soyez
il soit	ils soient

avoir (to have) - PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE	
j'aie	nous ayons
tu aies	vous ayez
il ait	ils aient

faire (to do) - PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE	
je fasse	nous fassions
tu fasses	vous fassiez
il fasse	ils fassent

pouvoir (to be able) - PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE	
je puisse	nous puissions
tu puisses	vous puissiez
il puisse	ils puissent

aller (to go) - PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE	
j'aie	nous allions
tu ailles	vous alliez
il aille	ils aillent

## USING THE SUBJUNCTIVE

There is always a reason for the subjunctive and most of the time the triggers are clear: some expressions or situation simply require you to use the subjunctive.

When there is any doubt, you can decide whether the subjunctive is needed by asking yourself some questions. We'll consider a number of triggers now.

## CONJUNCTIONS

The first group of subjunctive triggers we will consider are conjunctions.

### Bien que - although

Have a listen to this excerpt from a recent lesson:

**j'ai l'impression qu'elle aimerait bien être prof, et je pense que mes histoires l'ont convaincue que c'est un travail enrichissant, bien que des fois ce soit difficile**

"I get the impression that she would like to be a teacher, and I think that my stories have convinced her that it's a rewarding job, although at times it is difficult."

If you want to say "it's difficult" you would say **c'est difficile**. However if you say "although it's difficult" you need to say **bien que des fois ce soit difficile**.

In the recording, Mark worked through a couple of examples:

conjunctions example 1: bien que	
Although we speak French we understand English too.	<b>Bien que nous parlions français nous comprenons l'anglais aussi.</b>

conjunctions example 2: bien que	
Although I have a brother I don't see him often.	<b>Bien que j'aie un frère je ne le vois pas souvent.</b>

### Pour que - in order that

**Pour que** is another conjunction which requires the subjunctive. It means "in order that" or "so that", for example, "I am learning French so that I can talk to my neighbour".

conjunctions example 3: bien que	
I am doing it so that you come.	<b>Je le fais pour que tu viennes.</b>

## Pourvu que - provided that

**Pourvu que** means “provided that” or “on the condition that”, for example “we will buy the new car on the condition that you sell your old one”.

conjunctions example 4: bien que	
I am doing it provided that you come. (I am only doing it if you come).	<b>Je le fais pourvu que tu viennes.</b>

## EXPRESSING AN OPINION, EMOTIONS OR FEELINGS

Another group of subjunctive triggers involve expressing opinions or giving your emotional response to something.

### Être content que

Listen to this statement from Alf when he was talking about his daughter Sophie:

**Michael, le mari de Sophie, travaille dans l'industrie pétrolière, et il doit voyager beaucoup, donc Sophie est contente que sa mère puisse l'aider avec les nouveaux-nés**

“Michael, Sophie’s husband, works in the oil industry, and he has to travel a lot, so Sophie is happy that her mum can help her with the newborns.”

Here, Sophie is expressing an opinion that something is the case.

opinions example 1: être content que	
I am happy that you are here.	<b>Je suis content(e) que tu sois ici/ là.</b>

### Être incroyable que

In another example from Alf’s texts we hear him giving his opinion about something:

## C'est incroyable qu'il y ait encore des profs qui fassent des visites

"It's incredible/unbelievable that there are still teachers who do visits."

The expression **il y ait** is the subjunctive version of **il y a** and it's used because it follows **c'est incroyable que...** as Alf expresses his opinion.

## Être triste que

This is another expression which involves expression emotions and means "to be sad that...". Consider the example below:

opinions example 2 - être triste que	
I am sad that you cannot be here.	<b>Je suis triste que tu ne puisses pas être ici.</b>

## Further worked examples

opinions example 3 - être content que	
He is happy that you are going (there).	<b>Il est content que tu y ailles.</b>

opinions example 4 - être incroyable que	
It's incredible that you are selling the house.	<b>Il est incroyable que tu vendes la maison.</b>

## EXPRESSING DEMANDS OR ORDERS

The subjunctive is often used with certain expressions when you have to express a demand or an order.

## il faut que

We have come across **il faut que** on many occasions. Katie says that it is necessary that she and Raquel speak French together:



**Raquel est très gentille et c'est bien parce qu'elle ne parle pas anglais donc il faut que nous parlions en français ensemble.**

"Raquel is very nice and it's good because she doesn't speak English so it's necessary that we speak French together."

Note while **il faut que** means "it is necessary that...", it is often translated differently. For example, we could have translated what Katie said as "... so we must speak French together", or "so we have to speak French together".

Another example of **il faut que** comes from Veronica's texts:

**Voilà, il faut que je file.**

"Right then, I must dash".

Here are some further examples:

demands example 1 - il faut que	
You must finish now. (It is necessary that you finish now).	<b>Il faut que tu finisses maintenant.</b>

demands example 2 - il faut que	
It is necessary that I go (there).	<b>Il faut que j'y aille.</b>

**vouloir que (2 subjects)**

When you want someone else to do something, you use the subjunctive. This situation occurs where you have two subjects. Consider the phrase "I want you to do your homework". In this sentence, I am doing the "wanting" and you will do the "doing", so there are two subjects. We resolve this in English simply by using an infinitive: "I want you *to do* your homework". In French, we have to change it to "I want that you do (subjunctive) your homework".

A further example is given below.

demands example 2 - il faut que	
She wants me to be happy.	<b>Elle veut que je sois content.</b>

We will come across many more examples of the subjunctive in future lessons.