

# Hablando de gramática

por Señor Conner

Señor Conner is the author of the popular language series BREAKING THE SPANISH BARRIER. Each month he will feature a grammatical topic of interest to our readers. Have ideas of topics you would like to see covered? E-mail Señor Conner at [john@tobreak.com](mailto:john@tobreak.com). You can also visit his website: [www.tobreak.com](http://www.tobreak.com).

## The subjunctive mood after indirect commands

There is no getting around it! The subjunctive mood is used quite a bit in Spanish. In time, you will come to love it. This month's article will focus on one special use of the subjunctive: after an indirect command.

An indirect command features a main clause that asks someone to do something, and a dependent clause (the part of the sentence that follows "que") that mentions the action that the speaker wants another person to do. The subjunctive is used in that dependent clause because the action has not happened yet. There is a certain degree of uncertainty inherent in the sentence. The use of the subjunctive mood beautifully helps to express that uncertainty.

Examples:

***Quiero que mi vecina baje el volumen de su televisor.***

I want my neighbor to turn down the volume of her TV.

***Recomendamos que Uds. vean la nueva película, Brokeback Mountain.***

We recommend that you see the new movie, Brokeback Mountain.

***Insistes en que yo te dé un regalo grande este año para tu cumpleaños.***

You insist that I give you a big present this year for your birthday.

In all of these sentences above, the action in the dependent clause hasn't happened yet. It is not verifiable. For example, in the first sentence, my stubborn neighbor may not turn down her TV. In the second sentence, you all might have no interest in seeing Brokeback Mountain despite our recommendation. In the final sentence, though you insist I "wow" you with a big present, I may give you nothing at all! The subjunctive in all of those sentences makes the listener know that he just can't count on that action to happen.

**Here are some other common verbs that can express commands:**

**desear** (to wish, want)

**preferir** (to prefer)

**exigir** (to demand)

**rogar** (to beg)

**pedir** (to ask for)

**sugerir** (to suggest)

Examples:

***Nuestra abuela desea que le compremos el nuevo disco compacto de Juanes.***

Our grandmother wants us to buy her Juanes's new CD.

***El capitán exigió que los soldados limpiaran bien sus zapatos.***

The captain demanded that the soldiers clean their shoes well.

***Pedimos que los oficiales investiguen el caso.***

We are asking the officials to investigate the case.

Examples continued...

**¿Prefieres que yo te dé toda la información secreta ahora mismo?**

Do you prefer that I give you all the secret information right now?

**Mi novia me ruega que no salga con otra chica.**

My girlfriend begs me not to go out with another girl.

**Sugiero que todos los testigos digan la verdad.**

I suggest that all the witnesses tell the truth.

Remember, you need a new subject in a dependent clause, signaled by “que,” to use the subjunctive. If there is no new subject, use the infinitive!

Examples:

**Mi amigo desea salir con Shakira.**

My friend wants to go out with Shakira.

**Preferimos quedarnos en casa para ver los Golden Globes.**

We prefer to stay home to watch the Golden Globes.

## PRUEBA DE REPASO

Use the subjunctive, the indicative, or an infinitive:

- a) Mi madre insiste en que yo \_\_\_\_\_ otra canción de Cabas. (tocar)
- b) Mi amiga me ruega que le \_\_\_\_\_ una cadena de oro. (comprar)
- c) Mi papá nos prohíbe que \_\_\_\_\_ la nueva telenovela de Juan Soler. (ver)
- d) Queremos que nuestro hijo \_\_\_\_\_ a las ocho en punto. (acostarse)
- e) Queremos \_\_\_\_\_ a las ocho en punto. (acostarse)
- f) Recomiendo que tú \_\_\_\_\_ a la playa cuando salga el sol. (ir)
- g) Te pido que \_\_\_\_\_ la puerta en seguida. (cerrar)
- h) Insisto en que mis estudiantes \_\_\_\_\_ español durante la clase. (hablar)