



learning target

Aim of this section is to learn how to use the *Konjunktiv*.

German	English
Könntest du mir helfen? Ich wünschte , du wärst schon hier. Er sagte, er habe keine Zeit.	Could you help me? I wish you were here already. He said he had no time.

rules

What is Konjunktiv?

Konjunktiv is **NOT** a tense like Präsens, Präteritum, Perfekt, Zukunft...
Konjunktiv is a **mood**!

There are three moods in German:

- *Indikativ* (indicative)
- *Konjunktiv* (subjunctive)
- *Imperativ* (imperative)

The *Indikativ* is the real world. It's used to speak about all things which really happen.
 We've always used this mood so far. You just wasn't conscious of it.

The *Konjunktiv* is exactly the opposite of the *Indikativ*.

The *Konjunktiv* is used to speak about fictional things, things which are not real, things we would like to become reality.

The *Imperativ* you know already quite well. It's used to give a command or a request.
 You address something directly to somebody.

An example will make it clear:

example:

- **Tom lebt in Deutschland.** (Tom lives in Germany.)
 The sentences is in the *Indikativ* mood. It just describes the fact that Tom lives in Germany.
- **Ich wünschte, Cathy wäre in Deutschland.** (I wish Cathy were in Germany.)
 The sentences is in the *Konjunktiv* mood. My wish is that she is here but it's not the reality.
- **Bleib bei mir!** (Stay with me!)
 The sentences is in the *Imperativ* mood. I give you the "command" to stay with me.



For what do you need the Konjunktiv?

There are two different forms of *Konjunktiv*:

- **Konjunktiv I**
- **Konjunktiv II**

Konjunktiv I

Konjunktiv I is used for:

- reported speech
- some fixed phrases

examples:

- Pet Pet sagte, du **seist** zu Hause. (Pet Pet said you was at home.)
[reported speech]
- Gott **sei** Dank! (Thank godness!)
[some fixed phrases]

Konjunktiv II

Konjunktiv II is used for:

- make a polite request
- wishes / wishful thinking
- conditional sentences [mostly start with "wenn" (=if)]
- contrary to reality [introduced by "als ob" or "als wenn" (=both means: as if)]
- reported speech

examples:

- **Würdest** du mir bitte helfen? (Would you help me please?)
[make a polite request]
- Ich wünschte, ich **wäre** ein Millionär. (I wish I were a millionaire.)
[wishful thinking]
- Ich würde dir helfen, wenn ich mehr Geld **hätte**. (I would help you if I had more money.)
[conditional sentence]
- Er fährt, als ob er Michael Schuhmacher **wäre**. (He drives as if he were Michael Schuhmacher.)
[contrary to reality]
- Sie sagte, sie **hätte** heute keine Zeit. (She said she had no time today.)
[reported speech]



I want us to concentrate on *Konjunktiv II* for now and leave out *Konjunktiv I* completely because in almost all cases you'll need *Konjunktiv II* and we can still speak about *Konjunktiv I* later.

How do you form Konjunktiv II?

To form the *Konjunktiv II* in the present tense:

- take the Präteritum form of the verb
- change the vowel (a, o, u) into an "umlaut" if possible
- add an "e" if there is not already an ending "e" or "en"

example (verb: **be** in the "ich"-form)

Präsens	Präteritum	Konjunktiv II
ich bin	ich war	ich wäre

This rule doesn't work for "sollen", "wollen" and "werden", however.

That's why I suggest you learn these 9 verbs by heart because then you have covered almost everything you need for the *Konjunktiv II*.

The "real" Konjunktiv II of sein, haben, werden and the modal verbs

Infinitiv	ich	du	er / sie / es	wir	ihr	sie	Englisch
sein	wäre	wärest	wäre	wären	wäret	wären	be
haben	hätte	hättest	hätte	hätten	hättet	hätten	have
dürfen	dürfte	dürftest	dürfte	dürften	dürftet	dürften	may
können	könnte	könntest	könnte	könnten	könntet	könnten	can
mögen	möchte	möchtest	möchte	möchten	möchtet	möchten	would like
müssen	müsste	müsstest	müsste	müssten	müsstet	müssten	must
sollen	sollte	solltest	sollte	sollten	solltet	sollten	should
wollen	wollte	wolltest	wollte	wollten	wolltet	wollten	want
werden	würde	würdest	würde	würden	würdet	würden	become



The würde + infinitive construction

You might ask, what's about all the other verbs? You can apply the same rules for them, too and it would be grammatically perfect German but it's quite sure that people won't understand you or look at you rather sceptically.

The reason is that the "real" *Konjunktiv II* has disappeared more and more out of the German language. Nowadays, people use for all verbs (except the 9 verbs above) the "**würde + infinitive construction**" instead of the "real" *Konjunktiv II*.

example

The "real" *Konjunktiv II* of the verb gehen (to go) is:

Infinitiv	ich	du	er / sie / es	wir	ihr	sie	Englisch
gehen	ginge	gingest	ginge	gingen	ginget	gingen	go

That's grammatically 100% correct but I've never said in my life "du gingest" or "ihr ginget". Instead we use the "würde + infinitive construction".

Infinitiv	ich	du	er / sie / es	wir	ihr	sie	Englisch
gehen	würde gehen	würdest gehen	würde gehen	würden gehen	würdet gehen	würden gehen	go

The general rule to form the "würde + infinitive construction" is:

- conjugate "würden"
- add the infinitive form of the verb

Konjunktiv II in the past tense

So far, we just spoke about using the *Konjunktiv II* in the present tense. To make it complete I'd like to show how it's formed in the past tense.

All you have to do is to combine your knowledge of the "Perfekt" tense and what you learned so far about the *Konjunktiv II*.

The Perfekt tense is formed with: **helping verb** (haben or sein) + **Partizip II** of the main verb. You keep the Partizip II of the main verb and you just transform the helping verb in the *Konjunktiv II*.

Indikativ sentence - "Perfekt" tense	Konjunktiv II sentence - past tense
Ich habe gelernt. (=I learned.)	Ich hätte gelernt. (=I would have learned.)
Ich war gewesen. (=I was.)	Ich wäre gewesen. (=I would have been.)



The *Konjunktiv II - past tense* can only be formed in this way. There is no Präteritum form.
The word order is the same as in "normal" Perfekt sentences.

further examples:

- Ich wünschte, ich **wäre** hier **gewesen**. (I wish I would have been here.) [wishful thinking]
- Ich wünschte, ich **hätte** meine Hausaufgaben **gemacht**. (I wish I would have done my homework.) [wishful thinking]
- Ich **hätte** sie zum Krankenhaus **gebracht**, wenn ich dort **gewesen wäre**. (I would have taken her to hospital if I had been there.) [conditional sentence]
- Wir **hätten** keine gemeinsame Zukunft **gehabt**, wenn ich nach England **gegangen wäre**. (We wouldn't have had a common future if I had gone to England.) [conditional sentence]

An exception are sentences in the *Konjunktiv II - past tense* form which contain a modal verb.
Sentences like this are in my opinion the most difficult grammatical constructions.
I just want to give you the rule here. I won't torture you with exercises of this special topic.

You form the *Konjunktiv II - past tense* which contain modals verbs with:

helping verb (haben or sein) in the Konjunktiv II form + **main verb** in the infinitive form + **modal verb**

examples:

- Ich wünschte, ich **hätte** dir **helfen können**. (I wish I could have helped you.) [wishful thinking]
- Ich **hätte** weniger zu Hause **lernen müssen**, wenn ich dem Lehrer **zugehört hätte**. (I would have had to study less at home if I had listened to the teacher.) [conditional sentence]