The Moods of Verbs

Verbs have different moods, which change to indicate an action of factuality, command, or possibility. These three different types of actions are called indicative, subjunctive, and imperative. They are most easily learned through the study of verb conjugations, a precise order of the different tenses of verbs, both singular and plural. Learning to conjugate the verb to be in all three moods will aid in conjugating any other verb.

- Use the indicative mood for a statement or question:

  He walks a mile every day for his health.
  Do you think he will walk a mile today?

- Use the imperative mood to give a command or direction, with or without an explicit subject:

  Get out there and walk that mile!
  You walk a mile today or suffer the consequences!

- Use the subjunctive mood to express a variety of less common meanings:

  To express a condition contrary to fact:

  If I were to pick one runner to win, I would choose Joe. (not “was”)

  He is, as it were, the cornerstone of our club. (“as it were” indicates a figure of speech, not a literal statement)

  To express a requirement or recommendation:

  The Peachtree Road Race Committee requires that everyone submit an application by next month. (Not “submits”)

  It is important that all new runners be tested for high blood pressure before undertaking training. (Not “are”)

  To express a wish in which “may” is understood:

  Long live the King of the Mile-walkers. (not “lives”)
  Be it known that he will reign a long time. (not “is”)
  If he wishes to abdicate, then so be it. (not “is”)
  Suffice it to say that he does not wish to leave town. (not “suffices”)