

Mood-based questions in the SAT language section don't appear very frequently, but they do appear. So, it's good to be aware of what mood is, how it works, and how to identify and correct mood-related errors.

In language and writing generally, "mood" can refer to things like anger, happiness, sadness, and so on. In the reading comprehension section of the SAT you may very well be asked to identify the mood of a passage or piece of writing in this way.

But in the language section, and for this worksheet, "mood" means something more technical: namely, how the verb in a sentence expresses an attitude toward what it's saying. English has three basic types of mood: **indicative, imperative, and subjunctive**. You don't need to memorize these terms, but it helps to have a basic understanding of what they mean and how they function in a sentence.

Indicative

This mood is the most common type, used in sentences that share factual information:

It's a sunny day, so I'm wearing sunglasses.

The dog we adopted from the shelter was covered in fleas.

My favorite sport is professional paintball.

Imperative

The imperative mood is one in which a sentence tells something to do something:

Go play outside.

Don't text while driving!

Please take out the garbage.

Subjunctive

This is the potentially confusing one. The subjunctive mood rears its tricky head when a sentence expresses something hypothetical, wishful, or contrary to fact. Contrary to the indicative mood, which expresses reality or at least what appears to be real, the subjunctive mood expresses how the "speaker" feels about the thing being expressed. A good sign that a sentence is in the subjunctive mood is when it includes words and phrases such as "if," "would have," "should have," "wish," "I hope," and so on in that vein. For example, consider the following sentences:

She is not cold.

I hope that she is not cold.

The first sentence states the fact that “she” is cold. The second sentence does not state a fact; it expresses a hope, or wish, that “she” is not cold. See the difference? The first sentence is indicative, while the second is subjunctive.

On the SAT, you’re most likely to encounter subjunctive mood-related questions the verbs “to be” in it’s various tenses. For example, consider the following sentence:

If I were president, I would work for world peace.

It might sound natural to say “If I was president ...” But because we’re dealing with a hypothetical situation, i.e. the subjunctive mood, you need to use “were.”

Another example:

The announcer asked that the crowd be quiet before the tennis match began.

“Be” is necessary here because the sentence describes a situation that hasn’t yet happened.

Main Takeaway

Understanding mood as it related to verbs is important mainly so you don’t get tripped up on questions where you have to choose between “was” and “were.” Recognizing that a sentence is in the subjunctive mood will help you make the right choice.

MOOD

