Should in that-clauses; the present subjunctive

A
We can sometimes report advice, orders, requests, suggestions, etc. about things that need to be done or are desirable using a **that-clause** with **should + bare infinitive**:

- ○ They have proposed that Felix **should** *move* to their Munich office.
- ○ We advised **that** the company **should not** *raise* its prices.

After **should** we often use **be + past participle** (passive) or **be + adjective**:

- ○ They directed **that** the building **should** *be pulled down*.
- ○ We insist **that** the money **should** *be available* to all students in financial difficulties.

B
In formal contexts, particularly in written English, we can often leave out **should** and use only the base form of the verb (that is, the form you would look up in a dictionary). This form is the *present subjunctive* (see Unit 85A for the *past subjunctive*) and is used to describe bringing about the situation expressed in the **that-clause**:

- ○ They have proposed that Felix **move** to their Munich office.
- ○ They directed that the building **be pulled down**.

> *Other verbs used with the present subjunctive:*
> **advise, ask, beg, command, demand, insist, instruct, intend, order, prefer, recommend, request, require, stipulate, suggest, urge, warn**

To make a negative form, we use **not** (*not* 'do not') before the verb:

- ○ We advised that the company **not raise** its prices.

In less formal contexts we can use ordinary forms of the verb instead of the *subjunctive*. Compare:

- ○ I suggested that he **should give up** golf. (*negative:* ... that he **shouldn't** give up ...)
- ○ I suggested that he **give** up golf. (more formal) (*negative:* ... that he **not** give up ...)
- ○ I suggested that he **gives** up golf. (less formal) (*negative:* ... that he **doesn't** give up ...)

C
We can also use **that-clauses** with **should** or the subjunctive after *reporting clauses* with nouns related to the verbs in **B** (e.g. **advice, order, proposal, warning**):

- ○ The police issued an **order** that all weapons (should) be handed in immediately.
- ○ The weather forecast gave a **warning** that people (should) prepare for heavy snow.

D
We can also use **should** or sometimes the subjunctive in a **that-clause** after **it + be + adjective**:

- ○ **It is inappropriate** that he (*should*) *receive* the award again. (*or* ... that he *receives* ...)

> *Also:* **advisable, appalling, appropriate, (in)conceivable, crucial, essential, imperative, important, obligatory, (un)necessary, urgent, vital**

E
We can use **should** in a **that-clause** when we talk about our own reaction to something we are reporting, particularly after **be + adjective**. Compare:

- ○ *I am concerned* that she **should think** I stole the money (*or* ... that she **thinks** ...)

> *Also:* **amazed, amused, anxious, astounded, disappointed, shocked, surprised, upset**

Note that when we leave out **should** in sentences like this (= less formal) we use an ordinary tense, not a subjunctive.

F
We can use **should** in a **that-clause** to talk about a situation that exists now:

- ○ It's not surprising that they **should** *be seen* together – they're brothers.

or one that may exist in the future:

- ○ We believe it is important that she **should** *take* the exam next year.

If we are talking about an intention or plan, we can often use a *subjunctive* rather than **should**:

- ○ I've arranged that she **come** to the first part of the meeting. (*or* ... that she **should come** ... / ... that she **comes** ... / ... for her **to come** ...)

Exercises

39.1 Report these statements from a Spanit Engineering Company board meeting. Use a **that-clause** with **should (should + bare infinitive** or **should + be + past participle).** A–C

1 Lee said: 'I think it's important to expand business in South America.'
    Lee felt that business in South America should be expanded.

2 Lee said: 'Mara Bianchi would make an excellent export manager. Let's promote her.'
    Lee urged ....

3 Alice said: 'It would be valuable for us to send a sales representative to South Africa.'
    Alice recommended ....

4 Alice said: 'The Delaware Bridge project ought to be completed by August next year.'
    Alice reported ....

5 Simon said: 'It is vital to keep to our work schedules.'
    Simon insisted ....

6 Simon said: 'I'd like all monthly reports sent to me directly.'
    Simon instructed ....

7 Alina said: 'Perhaps we could use web conferencing for meetings to save money on air fares.'
    Alina suggested ....

8 Alina said: 'Our head office must remain in London.'
    Alina declared ....

9 Nathan said: 'It's okay for us to sponsor the European chess league for the next three years.'
    Nathan agreed ....

10 Nathan said: 'In future, all claims for travel expenses are to be made in US dollars.'
    Nathan announced ....

39.2 Look again at your answers for 39.1. Can any of the sentences be written without **should** and still be correct? Write 'yes' if it is possible and 'no' if not. A–C

1 ~~Lee felt that business in South America be expanded~~. ......No

39.3 Expand the notes using a **that-clause** with **should** and an adjective from the box to make reporting sentences. More than one adjective may be possible, but use each once only. D & E

> amused   appalling   astounded   imperative
> ~~inconceivable~~   shocked   upset   urgent

1 It is ... / she / marry Ben.
    It is inconceivable that she should marry Ben.

2 I am ... / Kristina / behave so badly.
    ....

3 I am ... / anyone / vote for him.
    ....

4 It is ... / he / return home immediately.
    ....

5 I am ... / he / take his appearance so seriously.
    ....

6 I am ... / they / think I had cheated them.
    ....

7 It is ... / they / allowed to go free.
    ....

8 It is ... / we / act now to avoid war.
    ....