

*Sequence of Tense in Dependent Clauses with the Subjunctive*

“Sequence” means a relationship of main verb and dependent verb. The main verb “governs” the sequence of the verb in the dependent clause. The sequence is said to be “primary” if the main verb is a present time indicative (“I know what...”); “secondary” if the main verb is a past time indicative (“I knew what...”). The main workhorse of secondary sequence is the perfect indicative, though the imperfect is common and other tenses are possible.

The tense of the subjunctive verb in the dependent clause is not only determined by its sequence, but also by whether its action occurs before or at the same time as the main verb. Subjunctives built upon the imperfective stem indicate action at the *same time* as the main clause; those built upon the perfective stems indicate action *before* that of the main clause.

It is possible to see both the sequence and the relative time from the tense of the subjunctive verb. That is, the chart below corresponds to the subjunctive verb morphology chart:

	Secondary Sequence (perfect indicative main verb, <i>scīvī</i> , "I knew")	Primary Sequence (present indicative main verb, <i>sciō</i> , "I know")
same time	imperfect subjunctive 3	present subjunctive 1
time before	pluperfect subjunctive 4	perfect subjunctive 2

- Examples:
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|--------------------------------|--|
| 1) <i>Sciō</i> quid faciās.    | I <u>know</u> what you <u>are doing</u> .        |
| 2) <i>Sciō</i> quid fēceris.   | I <u>know</u> what you <u>did / have done</u> .  |
| 3) <i>Scīvī</i> quid faceres.  | I <u>knew</u> what you <u>were doing / did</u> . |
| 4) <i>Scīvī</i> quid fēcissēs. | I <u>knew</u> what you <u>had done</u> .         |

"Time Before" is relatively rare outside of indirect questions because most dependent clauses in the subjunctive look forward to future actions. Nearly all other kinds of dependent clauses with the subjunctive show "same time" (since there is no way to show "time after").