

LESSON 10

Commands

10.1. Introduction

Positive commands are normally expressed by the Imperative Mood. Negative commands are normally expressed by μή with the Imperfect Imperative, or by μή with the Aorist Subjunctive. The Imperfect Aspect expresses continuous or repeated action. The Aorist Aspect expresses momentary action. The Perfect Aspect is used especially with verbs, whose Perfect Aspect has an Imperfect meaning, for example, ἔστηκα, 'I have taken my stand', hence 'I am standing'; μέμνημαι, 'I have recalled', hence 'I remember'. (Cf. Lesson 2.1 and Lesson 2.3.1.)

10.2. Negative Commands

The Aorist Imperative is not normally used in negative commands; it occurs occasionally in the third person, and rarely (and only in poetry) in the second person. The Imperfect Subjunctive is not normally used in negative commands; it occurs not at all in the second person, and only rarely in the third person.

This apparently arbitrary distinction of Moods (Imperative for Imperfect action, Subjunctive for Aorist action) had already developed in the classical period and has continued through Hellenistic usage up to modern Greek.

καί, ὅπερ λέγω, μὴ θορυβεῖτε, ὦ ἄνδρες. (Pl.Ap. 21 A.)

And, as I say, do not be making a disturbance, O men.

Imperfect Imperative.

καί μοι, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, μὴ θορυβήσητε, μηδ' ἐὰν δόξω τι ὑμῖν μέγα λέγειν. (Pl.Ap. 20 E.)

And please, O men of Athens, do not make a disturbance, not even if I seem to you to be telling something exaggerated.

Aorist Subjunctive.

It is sometimes suggested that μή with the Imperfect Imperative implies a command to *stop* doing something, while μή with the Aorist Subjunctive implies a command *not to start* doing something. This view sometimes suits the circumstances of a particular passage, but the basic principle seems to be the usual distinction of Aspects, as stated above. Moreover, there does not always seem to be any significant difference in function between Imperfect Imperative and Aorist Subjunctive in negative commands. An author's choice may depend partly on established idiom and partly on the meaning of a particular word, as well as on the distinction of Aspect.

10.3. Virtual Commands

Various idioms using Future Indicative, Aorist Subjunctive, and Imperfect or Aorist Optative may have the function of commands.

10.3.1. Future Indicative (Positive)

πρὸς ταῦτα **πράξεις** οἷον ἂν θέλῃς· (S.OC 956.)
In view of this [you will] do what you like.

10.3.2. Future Indicative (Negative: οὐ)

Ξεῖνε, κακῶς ἀνδρῶν τοξάζεαι· **οὐκέτ'** ἀέθλων
 ἄλλων **ἀντιάσεις**· νῦν τοι σῶς αἰπὺς ὄλεθρος. (Hom.Od. 22.27–28.)

Stranger, wrongly you shoot at men; never again [will you] take part in other contests; now indeed your sheer destruction <is> assured.

10.3.3. Future Indicative (Negative Interrogative: οὐ ...;)

οὐκ ἄξεθ' ὡς τάχιστα; καὶ κατηρεφεῖ
 τύμβω περιπτύξαντες, ὡς εἶρηκ' ἐγώ,
 ἄφετε μόνην ἔρημον ... (S.Ant. 885–887.)

[Will you not] take <her> as quickly as possible[?] And surrounding <her> with a vaulted tomb, as I have said, leave her alone, deserted ...

ἄφετε (Aor. Impv.) confirms the Imperative function of ἄξεθ' (ἄξετε, Fut. Indic.).

10.3.4. Future Indicative (Double Negative Interrogative: οὐ(...)**μή** ...;)

ὦ δεινὰ λέξας', οὐχὶ συγκλήσεις στόμα
καὶ **μή** μεθήσεις αὐθις αἰσχίστους λόγους; (E.Hipp. 498–499.)

O <you>, having said terrible things, will you not shut up your mouth and not emit most shameful words again?

Future Indicative occurs in both coordinate clauses, which are joined by καί. The first negative (οὐκ) negates the whole sentence. The second negative (μή) is functionally subordinate to the first negative and negates the second clause: 'Will you not shut up ... and will you not not emit ...?' (i.e. 'Shut up ... and do not emit ...').

οὐ **μή** φλυαρήσεις ἔχων, ὦ Ξανθία,
ἀλλ' ἀράμενος οἴσεις πάλιν τὰ στρώματα; (Ar.Ra. 524–525.)

*Do not keep on being silly, O Xanthias,
but pick up and carry the trappings back.*

Lit. 'Will you not not keep on being silly ..., but will you not carry ...?' Again, οὐ negates the whole sentence, μή further negates the first coordinate clause and the second clause is introduced by ἀλλά (not καί).

10.3.5. οὐ **μή** with Aorist Subjunctive

οὐ **μή** σκώψης μηδὲ ποιήσης ἅπερ οἱ τρυγοδαίμονες οὗτοι,
ἀλλ' εὐφήμεῖ. (Ar.Nu. 296–297.)

*Do not joke nor do what these comic poets do,
but keep silent.*

In this sentence, after an initial negative command with οὐ μή and the Aorist Subjunctive, a second negative command is added by μηδέ (also with Aor. Subj.), and a contrasting positive command follows with ἀλλά and Imperfect Imperative.

The origin and explanation of the constructions in §§10.3.4 and 10.3.5 are disputed. The issue is complicated by variant readings in manuscripts and emendations by editors, for example, -ης and -εις.

10.3.6. Optative with ἄν

ΤΟΥΤ' ΟΥΚΈΤ' ἄν Πύθουιο, μηδὲ λιπάρει. (A.Pr. 520.)

[You would] no longer make this enquiry, and do not persist.

The Imperative form λιπάρει in the second clause confirms the Imperative function of the Optative with ἄν in the first clause. Negative οὐ is used with this potential Optative.

Such sentences having Optative with ἄν are usually punctuated as statements, although they would often make sense as questions.

λέγοις ἄν ὡς τάχιστα, καὶ τάχ' εἴσομαι. (A.Th. 261.)

[Would you] speak as soon as possible[?] And I shall soon know.

10.4. Reported Commands

10.4.1. Reported Commands with Infinitive

Commands, requests and exhortations are most often reported in an Infinitive phrase as direct Object of a verb of commanding. Most verbs of commanding have a second direct Object in the Accusative, denoting the person who is commanded to do something. Instead of this second direct Object, particular verbs may have a Genitive of Separation or a Dative indirect Object.

The Aspect of the Infinitive in a reported command reflects the Aspect of the Imperative in the presumed direct command. And the Number of the noun or pronoun in the Accusative Object (or Genitive or Dative) of the reported command reflects the Number of the Imperative of the presumed direct command. The negative with the Infinitive is μή.

ἤδη κελεύω τούσδ' ἀπὸ γνώμης φέρειν
ψήφον δικαίαν ...; (A.Eu. 674–675.)

*Do I now command these <jurors> to cast a just vote
on the basis of their judgment ...?*

Acc. (pl.) and (Imperf.) Infin.

Direct form: φέρετε.

... αὐτοῦ τε Κύρου ἐδέοντο ὡς προθυμοτάτου πρὸς τὸν πόλεμον γενέσθαι. (X.Cyr. 1.5.2.)

... and they begged Cyrus himself to become as enthusiastic as possible for the war.

Genitive (sg.) and (Aor.) Infinitive.

Direct form: γενοῦ.

οὐ γὰρ ὄτι τοὺς ἀδικοῦντας ἐκόλαζον, ἀλλ' ἐνίοις καὶ προσέταπτον ἐξαμαρτάνειν. (Isoc. 18.17.)

For they were not only not punishing those acting unjustly, but they were actually instructing some to do wrong.

Dative (pl.) and (Imperf.) Infinitive.

Direct form: ἐξαμαρτάνετε. (For οὐ(...)*ὄτι* meaning 'not only not'; see Smyth, 1956, §2763.b.)

ὁ δὲ ἐπιλέξας τῶν ἀστῶν τοὺς ὑπόπτους μάλιστα ἐς ἐπανάστασιν ἀπέπεμπε τεσσαράκοντα τριήρεσι, ἐντειλάμενος Καμβύση ὀπίσω τούτους μὴ ἀποπέμπειν. (Hdt. 3.44.2.)

And he, having picked out from the citizens those whom he most suspected with respect to an uprising, sent them away on forty triremes, instructing Cambyses not to send these <men> back again.

Dative (sg.) and (Imperf.) Infinitive with negative μή.

Direct form: τούτους μὴ ἀπόπεμπε. τούς (Ionic) = οὓς (Attic).

10.4.2. Reported Commands with ὅπως

In addition to the more common Infinitive construction, some verbs of commanding may sometimes have as their Object a clause introduced by ὅπως. In Primary sequence, ὅπως is followed either by Future Indicative or by the Subjunctive (sometimes with ἄν). In Past sequence, ὅπως is followed by the Optative. Vivid constructions, using Subjunctive or Future Indicative in Past sequence, also occur. The negative is μή.

As the Object of a verb of commanding, these ὅπως clauses are noun clauses. Contrary to Smyth (1956, §2218), the ὅπως clause is best understood as merely stating the content of the command, not 'the purpose in giving it' as well. Purpose clauses with ὅπως are adverbial clauses, not noun clauses.

τοῖς οὖν ἄρχουσι καὶ πρῶτον καὶ μάλιστα παραγγέλλει ὁ θεός, ὅπως μηδενὸς οὕτω φύλακες ἀγαθοὶ ἔσονται μηδ' οὕτω σφόδρα φυλάξουσι μηδὲν ὡς τοὺς ἐκγόνους ... (Pl.R. 415 B.)

*Therefore the god both first and foremost **commands** the rulers **to be** good guardians of **nothing** so much as the children, and to guard carefully **nothing** so much <as them>...*

ὅπως with Future Indicative and negative μή compounds in Primary sequence.

λύουσι γάρ, ἔφη, οἱ ἔνδεκα Σωκράτη καὶ παραγγέλλουσιν ὅπως ἂν τῆδε τῆ ἡμέρα τελευτᾷ. (Pl.Phil. 59 E.)

*'For the Eleven', he said, 'are unchaining Socrates and **are giving orders that he is to die** on this day'.*

ὅπως with Subjunctive and ἄν in Primary sequence.

... ἐδέοντό τε τῶν στρατηγῶν ὅπως ἀπάγοιεν σφέας ὀπίσω ... (Hdt. 9.117.)

*... and **they begged** their generals to **lead** [OR: *that they should lead*] them **away** <and take them> back again ...*

ὅπως (Attic ὅπως) with Optative in Past sequence.

... καλέσας αὐτὸν Δημοκῆδεα ἐδέετο αὐτοῦ ὅπως ἐξηγησάμενος πᾶσαν καὶ ἐπιδέξας τὴν Ἑλλάδα τοῖσι Πέρσησι ὀπίσω ἦξει. (Hdt. 3.135.2.)

*... summoning Democedes himself, **he required** of him **that**, when he had shown the way and had displayed all Greece to the Persians, **he should come** back.*

Vivid construction with Future Indicative in Past sequence.

Hom.Od. 3.327 seems to be the only instance of ἵνα + Subjunctive expressing a reported request or command prior to the later classical or Hellenistic periods.

References

Goodwin (1889), *Syntax of the moods and tenses of the Greek verb*, §§237, 250–251, 259–260, 294, 297–298, 355–357, 746–747, Appendix II (pp. 389–397).

Smyth (1956), *Greek grammar*, §§1800, 1830, 1835–1836, 1840–1841, 1918–1919, 1991–1992, 1996–1998, 2155, 2210, 2218, 2754, 2756–2757.

Goodwin (1889, Appendix II) has not convinced all his contemporaries nor all subsequent scholars.

EXERCISE 10

Translate the following passages. The Imperative function of virtual commands should be made clear in translation.

1. καί μοι τὰ μὲν παρόντα μὴ δύρεσθ' ἄχη,
πέδοι δὲ βᾶσαι τὰς προσερούσας τύχας
ἀκούσαθ'...

| | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| (ὁ)δύρεσθαι | <i>to lament (for) (+ Acc.)</i> |
| ἄχος, -ους, τό | <i>pain</i> |
| πέδοι (adv.) | <i>(on) to the ground</i> |
| προσέρπειν | <i>to approach</i> |
| ἀκούσαθ' | <i>ἀκούσατε</i> |

2. στείχοις ἄν ἤδη· καὶ γὰρ ἐξεπίστασαι
τά γ' ἐν δόμοισιν ὡς ἔχοντα τυγχάνει.

| | |
|----|--|
| ὡς | <i>how (Introduces reported question after ἐπίστασαι.)</i> |
|----|--|

3. μή μοι θάνης σὺ κοινά, μηδ' ἄ μὴ ἴθιγες
ποιοῦ σεαυτῆς·

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| κοινά (adverbial Acc. neut.) | <i>in common (with), jointly (with) (+ Dat.)</i> |
| μηδέ | <i>and (...) not</i> |
| θιγγάνειν | <i>to touch, to handle</i> |
| ποιεῖσθαι (Mid.) | <i>to make, to claim as; to regard as (here + Possessive Gen.)</i> |

4. Euadne: ἄσσω θανόντος Καπανέως τήνδ' ἔς πυράν.
Iphis: ὦ θύγατερ, οὐ μὴ μῦθον ἐπὶ πολλοὺς ἐρεῖς;

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| ἄτσσειν, ἄσσειν | <i>to move quickly, to hurry</i> |
| Καπανεύς, -έως, ὁ | here Possessive Gen. |
| πυρά, -ᾱς, ἡ | <i>pyre</i> |
| μῦθος, -ου, ὁ | <i>statement, announcement</i> |
| ἐπί (+ Acc.) | <i>before, in the presence of</i> (Some editors emend to ἐς.) |

5. αἱ μὲν γὰρ πλείσται πόλεις ἀφείσαι παιδεύειν ὅπως τις ἐθέλει τοὺς ἑαυτοῦ παῖδας ... προστάττουσιν αὐτοῖς μὴ κλέπτειν μηδὲ ἀρπάζειν ...

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| ἀφιέναι | <i>to allow</i> |
| ὅπως (+ Indic.) | <i>as</i> |

6. καὶ Σεύθην ἐκέλευον παραγγεῖλαι ὅπως εἰς τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ στρατόπεδα μηδεὶς τῶν Θρακῶν εἴσεισι νυκτός·

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| καί | <i>And</i> (Links whole sentence to preceding.) |
| Σεύθης, -ου, ὁ | <i>Seuthes</i> |
| ἐκέλευον | 3rd pers. pl. |
| στρατόπεδον, -ου, τό | <i>camp</i> |
| εἰσιέναι | <i>to go into, to enter</i> (Pres. Indic. equivalent to Fut.) |

7. Therefore, from a distance catching sight of us having set off for home, Polemarchus the son of Cephalus told his slave to run and tell [us] to wait for him. And the slave, catching me from behind by the cloak, said, 'Polemarchus tells you [pl.] to wait'.

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>from a distance</i> | πόρρωθεν |
| <i>to catch sight of</i> | καθορᾶν, Aor. κατιδεῖν (+ Acc.) |
| <i>to set off</i> | ὀρμᾶσθαι |
| <i>Polemarchus</i> | Πολέμαρχος, -ου, ὁ |
| <i>Cephalus</i> | Κέφαλος, -ου, ὁ |
| <i>to run</i> | τρέχειν, Aor. δραμεῖν |

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <i>to wait (for)</i> | περιμένειν (+ Acc.) |
| <i>to catch (someone)</i> | λαμβάνεσθαι (Mid.) (+ double Gen.) |
| <i>by (something)</i> | |
| <i>from behind</i> | ὄπισθεν |
| <i>cloak</i> | ἱμάτιον, -ου, τό |
| <i>'Polemarchus tells ...'</i> | Use direct speech in Greek. |

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