

SEQUENCE OF TENSES *(consecutiō temporum)*

Remember, only verbs in the indicative mood indicate the real or absolute time that an event occurs. All other moods (participle, infinitive, subjunctive) represent only whether the action happens before, at the same time, or after the action of the main verb. The dependent subjunctives we'll encounter in Latin follow one of two logical patterns, depending on whether the action of the controlling verb 1) is happening now or is about to happen (we call these "primary" verbs), or 2) has already happened ("historical" or "secondary" verbs). These patterns are called the SEQUENCE OF TENSES.

If the Verb in the Main Clause is...	then the sentence belongs to the...	The Tense of the Subjunctive Verb in the Subordinate Clause can be...	indicating that the Action of the Subordinate Clause happens...
Present	} Primary Sequence.	[Future Participle + <i>sim</i>	→ <u>After</u> the Main Clause].
Future		Present	→ At the <u>Same Time</u> or <u>After</u> the Main Clause. ²
Future Perfect		Perfect	→ <u>Before</u> the Main Clause.
[Perfect] ¹			
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Imperfect	} Historical (or Secondary) Sequence.	[Future Participle + <i>essem</i>	→ <u>After</u> the Main Clause].
Perfect		Imperfect	→ At the <u>Same Time</u> or <u>After</u> the Main Clause.
Pluperfect		Pluperfect	→ <u>Before</u> the Main Clause.

Nota Bene:

1) You'll notice that the perfect tense can introduce both the primary and historical sequences. Why? Because the perfect can convey two distinct senses, just like the English preterit ("I saw") and present perfect ("I have seen"). When the perfect indicates a past action with some immediate impact on the present (English uses the present perfect for this), it is considered part of the primary sequence.

2) Since the present and imperfect can indicate an event occurring after as well as at the same time as the main clause, the use of the future periphrastic (future participle + form of *to be*) is reserved for those moments when the speaker really needs to emphasize the futurity of the event.