

All-Class, September 2007

The Curse Factory

The Need

A merry band of intrepid warriors has just returned from the Renaissance Festival, where they perform beneficial public services . . . such as handing out curses.

You can never have too many curses. Oh, all right, a few blessings won't hurt either . . .

The Solution

We'll spend some time working in teams to come up with some new curses and blessings, *as Gaeilge*, that they can take to *next* year's event. Do keep the Renaissance Festival atmosphere in mind.

The Tool

It's simple, we'll just use the subjunctive. *Whoa! Come back here! This isn't going to hurt, honest!*

You use the subjunctive every time you say *Go raibh maith agat*, or *Go n-éirí an bóthar leat!*

How It's Done

We use the subjunctive to express something we wish for (on) another person, and many common blessings and curses are in this form. But we can make new ones. Here are the steps:

1. Start with the 2nd person singular imperative (generally the same as the *root* of the verb except for some irregular verbs — take the ending off the habitual present).
2. For a Type 1 (short) verb, add the *sound* "uh", by tacking either **-e** or **-a** onto the root.
For a Type 2 (long) verb, add the sound "ee", by tacking on **-aí** or just **-í**.
3. To say you *want the thing to happen*, put **Go** in front of it, and eclipse the verb.
To say you do **not** want it to happen, put **Nár** in front of it, and lenite the verb.

You're done! But "tá" works differently. Use **raibh** for the verb, and use **Go** or **Ná** in front of raibh. Also, verbs that end in -áil (sábháil) will broaden the final l and add "uh": *Go sábhála Dia sinn!* And finally, Type 2 verbs that "collapse" their endings — imir ⇌ imríonn — do that here, too: *Nár imrí . . .*

Examples:

pós = "marry" pós ⇌ pósa ⇌ Go bpósa/Nár phósa ⇌
Go bpósa do dheirfiúr an luchaire! May your sister marry the rat-catcher!

feic = "see" feic ⇌ feice ⇌ Go bhfeice/Nár fheice
Nár fheice tú do charr arís ariamh! May you never see your car again!

tá + ag = "have" **Go/Ná raibh x agat**, very useful formula
Go raibh bean chéile óg agat . . . agus go raibh saol fada ag do mháthair chéile!
May you have a young wife . . . and a long life to your mother-in-law!

tit = "fall" tit ⇌ tite ⇌ Go dtite/Nár thite
Go dtite tú i ngrá . . . agus go raibh a fear céile amaideach!
May you fall in love . . . and may her husband be stupid.

foghlaim = "learn" foghlaim ⇌ foghlaimí ⇌ Go bhfoghlaimí/Nár fhoghlaimí . . .
Go bhfoghlaimí tú Gaeilge! (Fielder's choice: you decide if this is a blessing or a curse.)