

Should, ought to,  
have to, must



# Have to

I **have to** do something = it is necessary to do it, I am obliged to do it:

- You can't turn right here. You **have to** turn left.
- I **have to** wear glasses for reading.
- George can't come out with us this evening.  
He **has to** work late.
- Last week Tina broke her arm and **had to** go to hospital.
- I haven't **had to** go to the doctor for ages.

You **have to** turn left here.



We use **do/does/did** in questions and negative sentences (for the present and past simple):

- What **do** I **have to do** to get a new driving licence? (*not* What have I to do?)
- Karen **doesn't have to** work Saturdays. (*not* Karen hasn't to)
- Why **did** you **have to** leave early?

You can use **have to** with **will** and **might/may**:

- If the pain gets worse, you'll **have to** go to the doctor.
- I **might have to** work late tomorrow evening. *or* I **may have to** work ...  
(= it's possible that I will have to)



# Must

**Must** is similar to **have to**:

- It's later than I thought. **I must go.** *or* **I have to go.**

You can use **must** to give your own opinion (for example, to say what *you* think is necessary, or to recommend someone to do something). **Have to** is also possible:

- I haven't spoken to Sue for ages. **I must phone her.** (= I say this is necessary)
- Mark is a really nice person. **You must meet him.** (I recommend this)

We use **have to** (*not must*) to say what someone is *obliged* to do. The speaker is not giving his/her own opinion:

- **I have to work** from 8.30 to 5.30 every day. (a fact, not an opinion)
- Jane **has to travel** a lot for her work.

But **must** is often used in written rules and instructions:

- Applications for the job **must be received** by 18 May.
- (*exam instruction*) **You must write** your answers in ink.

You cannot use **must** to talk about the past:

- **We had to leave** early. (*not we must*)



# Mustn't and don't have to

**Mustn't and don't have to are completely different:**

You **mustn't** do something = it is necessary that you do *not* do it (so don't do it):

- ❑ You **must keep** it a secret. You **mustn't** tell anyone. (= don't tell anyone)
- ❑ I promised I would be on time. I **mustn't** be late. (= I must be on time)

You **don't have to** do something = you don't need to do it (but you can if you want):

- ❑ You **don't have to tell** him, but you can if you want to.
- ❑ I **don't have to be** at the meeting, but I think I'll go anyway.



# Have got to

You can use **have got to** instead of **have to**. So you can say:

- I've got to work tomorrow.     *or*     I have to work tomorrow.
- When has Liz got to go?     *or*     When does Liz have to go?



# Should

You **should do** something = it is a good thing to do or the right thing to do. You can use **should** to give advice or to give an opinion:

- You look tired. You **should go** to bed.
- The government **should do** more to reduce crime.
- 'Should we invite** Susan to the party?' 'Yes, I think we **should.**'

We often use **should** with I think / I don't think / Do you think ... ?:

- I think** the government **should do** more to reduce crime.
- I don't think** you **should work** so hard.
- 'Do you think I should** apply for this job?' 'Yes, **I think you should.**'

You **shouldn't do** something = it isn't a good thing to do:

- You **shouldn't believe** everything you read in the newspapers.

**Should** is not as strong as **must** or **have to**:

- You **should** apologise. (= it would be a good thing to do)
- You **must** apologise. / You **have to** apologise. (= you have no alternative)



# Should

You can use **should** when something is not right or what you expect:

- ❑ I wonder where Tina is. She **should be** here by now.  
(= she isn't here yet, and this is not normal)
- ❑ The price on this packet is wrong. It **should be** £2.50, not £3.50.
- ❑ That man on the motorbike **should be** wearing a helmet.

We also use **should** to say that we expect something to happen:

- ❑ She's been studying hard for the exam, so she **should pass**. (= I expect her to pass)
- ❑ There are plenty of hotels in the town. It **shouldn't be** difficult to find somewhere to stay.  
(= I don't expect it to be difficult)





# Should have done

You **should have done** something = you didn't do it, but it would have been the right thing to do:

- ❑ You missed a great party last night. You **should have come**. Why didn't you?  
(= you didn't come, but it would have been good to come)
- ❑ I wonder why they're so late. They **should have arrived** long ago.

You **shouldn't have done** something = you did it, but it was the wrong thing to do:

- ❑ I'm feeling sick. I **shouldn't have eaten** so much. (= I ate too much)
- ❑ She **shouldn't have been listening** to our conversation. It was private.  
(= she was listening)

Compare **should (do)** and **should have (done)**:

- ❑ You look tired. You **should go** to bed now.
- ❑ You went to bed very late last night. You **should have gone** to bed earlier.



# Ought to

## Ought to ...

You can use **ought to** instead of **should** in the sentences on this page. We say 'ought to do' (with to):

- Do you think I **ought to apply** for this job? (= Do you think I **should apply** ... ?)
- Jack **ought not to go** to bed so late. (= Jack **shouldn't go** ...)
- It was a great party last night. You **ought to have come**.
- She's been studying hard for the exam, so she **ought to pass**.