

B1 TEENS

Escape Room Challenge

Problem-solving under pressure and modal verbs for advice, obligation, prohibition

B1 Intermediate | Grammar | Reading | 40 min

★ Lesson Objectives

- ✓ Read about escape rooms -- how they work, why they're popular, what skills they test
- ✓ Learn vocabulary for problem-solving, teamwork and logical thinking
- ✓ Use should/shouldn't for advice, must/have to for obligation, mustn't for prohibition
- ✓ Understand the key difference between mustn't and don't have to
- ✓ Discuss teamwork, communication and thinking under pressure
- ✓ Write rules or instructions for an escape room using modal verbs

1 Before You Read

- ▶ Have you ever been to an escape room? Did you escape?
- ▶ What skills do you need to solve puzzles under time pressure?
- ▶ Are you better at working alone or in a team?

2 Reading: Locked In -- Can You Get Out?

Words in this colour are key vocabulary -- definitions are in Section 3.

Locked In -- Can You Get Out?

Imagine this: you and your friends walk into a room. The door **locks** behind you. A voice tells you that you have exactly sixty minutes to find **clues**, solve **puzzles**, crack codes, and escape before time runs out. Your heart is racing, your brain is working overtime, and everyone is talking at once. Welcome to the world of escape rooms -- one of the fastest-growing **entertainment** trends on the planet.

Escape rooms first appeared in Japan in 2007, inspired by online "point-and-click" video games where players had to find hidden objects and solve **riddles** to progress. The concept quickly spread worldwide. Today, there are over 50,000 escape rooms, and the

industry is worth more than 1.2 billion dollars. Themes range from **detective** mysteries and haunted houses to space missions and bank **heists**. Some rooms use advanced technology like laser **sensors** and electronic locks. Others rely on simple padlocks, **combination** codes and old-fashioned brain power.

But what makes escape rooms so **addictive**? Psychologist Dr. Nina Kovac, who studies group behaviour and **collaboration**, says the answer lies in how our brains respond to **pressure**. "When you're in an escape room, your brain enters a state of focused **concentration**. The time limit creates **urgency**, and urgency makes you think faster, communicate better and take more creative risks. It's a controlled form of stress -- the kind that actually improves performance rather than **hindering** it."

Dr. Kovac also explains why teamwork is so important. "In a good team, everyone should **contribute** something different. You have to listen to each other, share discoveries, and avoid **panicking**. The teams that fail are usually the ones where nobody listens, or where one person tries to do everything alone. You mustn't ignore your teammates -- even the quietest person might have the answer."

Sixteen-year-old Kai from Berlin has completed over thirty escape rooms. "The first time, we didn't even come close. We were running around **randomly**, shouting at each other. Now we have **strategies**. First, you should search the room **systematically**. Second, you must communicate -- if you find something, tell the group immediately. Third, you don't have to solve every puzzle yourself -- ask for help. And finally, you shouldn't panic when the clock is ticking. Panic makes you stupid."

Escape room designer Sofia Reyes from Madrid shares **insider** tips. "You should always look under things, behind things and inside things. You must read every instruction carefully -- people often miss **details** because they rush. And you don't have to use every object in the room -- some things are **deliberately** placed there to **mislead** you."

Whether you're a puzzle lover, a team player or someone who enjoys a good **challenge**, escape rooms have something for everyone. As Kai puts it: "It's the only activity where you have to use your brain instead of your screen."

3 Vocabulary

Word	Definition	Example
clue	information that helps solve a puzzle	"Found a clue behind the painting."
puzzle	game that tests thinking skills	"The hardest puzzle had a code."
riddle	question with a hidden meaning	"Solve the riddle for the next clue."
combination	sequence that opens a lock	"Combination was hidden in a book."
detective	person who investigates mysteries	"Detective mystery theme."
heist	carefully planned robbery	"Bank heist room was popular."

Word	Definition	Example
sensor	device detecting movement/light	"Laser sensors guarded the exit."
collaboration	working together for a goal	"Collaboration is the key."
urgency	need to act quickly	"The timer creates urgency."
contribute	give something useful to a group	"Everyone should contribute."
strategy	plan to achieve a goal	"We developed a strategy."
systematically	in an organised way	"Search the room systematically."
mislead	cause to believe something false	"Some objects mislead you."
insider	person with special knowledge	"She shared insider tips."
challenge	something that tests your skills	"A real challenge."
panic	sudden strong fear	"Don't panic under pressure."

Collocations: solve a puzzle • crack a code • find a clue • work as a team • under pressure • time limit • think outside the box • against the clock

4

Grammar: Modal Verbs -- Advice, Obligation, Prohibition

should = advice: "You should search the room systematically."

must = strong obligation: "You must communicate with your team."

mustn't = prohibition: "You mustn't ignore your teammates."

don't have to = no obligation: "You don't have to solve every puzzle yourself."

Modal	Meaning	Strength	Example
must	obligation (rule)	very strong	You must read instructions.
have to	external obligation	strong	You have to work as a team.
should	advice (good idea)	medium	You should look under things.
shouldn't	advice against	medium	You shouldn't waste time.
mustn't	prohibition (forbidden)	very strong	You mustn't touch the laser.
don't have to	no obligation (choice)	free choice	You don't have to use every object.

mustn't vs don't have to -- KEY DIFFERENCE

mustn't = FORBIDDEN: "You mustn't open that door." = Danger! Don't do it!

don't have to = YOUR CHOICE: "You don't have to finish it alone." = It's OK, no problem.

⚠ Common Mistakes

~~You don't have to touch that wire!~~ → You mustn't touch that wire! (dangerous = prohibition)

~~You mustn't wear a uniform — it's optional.~~ → You don't have to wear a uniform. (optional = no obligation)

~~You should to listen carefully.~~ → You should listen carefully. (no "to" after should)

5 Match the Halves

#	Beginning	Ending
1	You should search the room	systematically before touching anything.
2	You must communicate	whenever you find a clue.
3	You mustn't ignore	what your teammates say.
4	You don't have to solve	every puzzle by yourself.
5	You shouldn't panic	when the timer is running low.
6	You have to read	every instruction carefully.
7	You should look under things	because clues are often hidden.
8	You mustn't break	any objects in the room.
9	You don't have to use	every object -- some mislead.
10	You should ask for a hint	if you've been stuck 10+ minutes.

6 Comprehension Quiz

1. Where did escape rooms first appear?

Answer: Japan (2007)

2. Why does the time limit help (Dr. Kovac)?

Answer: Creates urgency, makes you think faster/more creatively

3. Teams fail when...

Answer: Nobody listens or one person tries to do everything

4. Sofia Reyes says about objects in the room...

Answer: Some are deliberately placed to mislead you

5. 'You should search carefully.' This is...

Answer: Advice (a good idea)

6. 'You mustn't touch the laser.' Means...

Answer: It's forbidden -- don't do it!

7. 'You don't have to solve it alone.' Means...

Answer: Not necessary -- you can ask for help

8. Which is WRONG?

Answer: You should to search the room first.

7 Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: should • shouldn't • must • mustn't • have to • don't have to

1. You _____ search the room systematically.
2. You _____ tell your team when you find a clue.
3. You _____ break any objects -- it's against the rules.
4. You _____ use every object -- some are distractions.
5. You _____ waste time arguing.
6. You _____ work as a team -- you can't escape alone.
7. You _____ ask for a hint if you're stuck.
8. You _____ use your phone -- it's forbidden.

Answers: 1. should • 2. must • 3. mustn't • 4. don't have to • 5. shouldn't • 6. have to • 7. should • 8. mustn't

8 Speaking & Writing

◆ Discussion Questions

Have you been to an escape room? Describe it.

Most important skill: logic, communication, creativity, or patience?

Would you rather lead or follow in a team? Why?

What theme would you choose for your own escape room?

Do escape rooms teach useful real-life skills?

◆ **Example Dialogue**

A: OK, we have sixty minutes. What should we do first?

B: We should search systematically. You check that side, I'll check this side.

A: I found a key under the chair! But which lock does it open?

B: We must try every lock. And we mustn't forget to check behind the paintings.

A: I'm stuck on this riddle. Should I ask for a hint?

B: Not yet. You don't have to solve it alone -- let me have a look.

✎ **Writing Task**

Write 100-150 words. Use at least 3 different modals:

Option A: Design your own escape room. What must players do? What should they look for?

Option B: Describe a time you solved a problem under pressure.

9 Escape Room Challenge – The Game

Interactive game available online. Choose the correct modal verb to escape 10 rooms!

#	Scenario	Answer
1	You ___ search first. (advice)	should
2	You ___ break anything! (forbidden)	mustn't
3	You ___ use every object. (not necessary)	don't have to
4	You ___ tell team about clues. (essential)	must
5	You ___ panic. (advice against)	shouldn't
6	You ___ work as a team. (obligation)	have to
7	'DO NOT OPEN.' You ___ open it. (rule)	mustn't
8	You ___ ask for a hint if stuck. (advice)	should
9	Costumes are optional. You ___ wear one.	don't have to
10	Phones are forbidden. You ___ use yours.	mustn't

**1
0**

Review Checklist

- ✓ I can understand a text about escape rooms and problem-solving
- ✓ I can use vocabulary for puzzles, teamwork and logical thinking
- ✓ I can use should/shouldn't for advice
- ✓ I can use must/have to for obligation and mustn't for prohibition
- ✓ I know the difference between mustn't and don't have to
- ✓ I can write rules and instructions using modal verbs

Congratulations!

You have completed this lesson: Escape Room Challenge