

A2 · TEENS · LESSON 11 · MODALS

You *really* should try this.

Advice, rules, necessity — English has three small words that do big jobs. Learn when to reach for *should*, when *must* is right, and how *have to* changes everything.

should

Advice · Opinion

must

Strong rule · Feeling

have to

External obligation



Warm-Up

Advice · Rules · Obligation

Before we begin...

Think about three very different situations — a friend asking for advice, a sign in a museum, and your parents' rule about school nights. Each one needs a different modal.

1. Your friend is nervous about a test. What **should** they do the night before?
2. Look at signs around you. Find one thing you **must not** do in a public place.
3. Name one thing you **have to** do at school (even if you don't want to).
4. Name one thing you **don't have to** do on weekends — a freedom that feels good.



Grammar Focus

should / must / have to

Should, **must**, and **have to** are all ways of saying *this is a good idea* or *this is necessary*. But they are not the same — choosing the right one shows that you really understand English.

Should is for *advice and opinions*. **Must** is for *strong personal feelings and written rules*. **Have to** is for *rules that come from outside you* — laws, school, your parents, your job.

THE STRUCTURE

subject + **should / must** + **base verb**

subject + **have / has to** + **base verb**

FORMS AT A GLANCE

| MODAL | POSITIVE | NEGATIVE | QUESTION |
|----------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| should | You should rest. | You shouldn't lie. | Should I call her? |
| must | I must study. | You mustn't run. | <i>(rarely used)</i> |
| have to | She has to wait. | I don't have to go. | Do you have to leave? |

USE 1 · ADVICE & SUGGESTIONS → SHOULD

When you give your opinion about a good idea

Use *should* when you're suggesting what is sensible, healthy, kind, or wise — but not forcing anyone. It's the softest of the three.

"You **should** drink more water."

"Teenagers **shouldn't** skip breakfast."

"**Should** I apologise to her?"

USE 2 · STRONG FEELINGS & RULES → MUST**When the speaker (or a written rule) says it strongly**

Use *must* when **you** feel something is essential, or when written rules command it (signs, textbooks, laws). It sounds formal.

"I **must** finish this project by Friday." (*I decide it's urgent*)

"Visitors **must** show ID at reception." (*a rule*)

"You **mustn't** touch the exhibits." (*strong prohibition*)

USE 3 · OBLIGATION FROM OTHERS → HAVE TO**When someone or something else gives the rule**

Use *have to* when the obligation comes from **outside you** — a law, school, parents, a job. The person speaking doesn't decide the rule; they just follow it.

"We **have to** wear a uniform at school." (*school's rule*)

"My sister **has to** work on Saturdays." (*job's rule*)

"**Do you have to** leave so early?"

must vs. have to — the feeling difference

MUST (internal)

The rule comes *from you*. You feel it strongly.

"I must call my grandma tonight."

(I feel it's important to me)

"You must see that film!"

(strong personal recommendation)

HAVE TO (external)

The rule comes *from somewhere else*. You just obey.

"I have to call the dentist to book an appointment."

(practical necessity)

"You have to be 18 to vote."

(the law)

WATCH OUT

mustn't ≠ don't have to

These two look similar, but their meanings are *opposite*. This is the most common modal mistake at A2. Get this right and you'll sound much more accurate.

mustn't

= it is **forbidden**. You are **not allowed**.

"*You mustn't smoke here.*" (it's prohibited)

don't have to

= it is **not necessary**. You can if you want, but no one is forcing you.

"*You don't have to come.*" (optional)

NEGATIVES

He **shouldn't** text while driving.

You **mustn't** swim here.

I **don't have to** wake up early on Sundays.

She **doesn't have to** pay — it's free.

QUESTIONS

Should we tell the teacher?

What **should** I wear tonight?

Do you **have to** work tomorrow?

Why **does** she **have to** leave?



Key Vocabulary

10 words for rules & advice

WORD

IPA

MEANING

EXAMPLE

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| advice | /əd'vaɪs/ | (n, U) an opinion about what someone should do | <i>Can I give you some advice?</i> |
| rule | /ru:l/ | (n) a written instruction to follow | <i>Read the rules of the game.</i> |
| obligation | /,ɒb.lɪ'geɪ.jən/ | (n) something you have to do | <i>Paying taxes is a legal obligation.</i> |
| allowed | /ə'laʊd/ | (adj) permitted by a rule | <i>Phones are not allowed in the exam.</i> |
| forbidden | /fə'bɪd.ən/ | (adj) not allowed by a rule or law | <i>Swimming is forbidden here.</i> |
| necessary | /'nes.ə.ser.i/ | (adj) needed; you can't go without it | <i>Is it necessary to book in advance?</i> |
| probably | /'prɒb.ə.bli/ | (adv) very likely, almost certain | <i>You should probably call her.</i> |
| seriously | /'sɪə.ri.əs.li/ | (adv) very, genuinely (colloquial intensifier) | <i>Seriously, you must try this cake.</i> |
| warn | /wɔ:n/ | (v) to tell someone about a possible problem | <i>I warned him about the ice.</i> |
| suggest | /sə'dʒest/ | (v) to offer an idea for consideration | <i>I suggest you take the bus.</i> |

IV Reading

Four situations, four different modals

MODAL MONTHLY · ISSUE 11

You Really *Should* Try This

Four short stories where advice, rules, and obligations collide — from a Japanese bathhouse to a Saturday café shift in São Paulo.

Across four cities, four teenagers navigate the small grammar of daily life — when to give advice, when to obey a sign, when to follow the boss's rules. Each story spotlights one modal so you can hear the difference in the wild.

STORY ONE · ADVICE

Sena, 15 · Sapporo

Sena is sitting on the wooden edge of an *onsen*, a Japanese hot spring, with her cousin from Australia. Her cousin, Jess, has never been to one before and she looks nervous. "It's not scary," Sena laughs. "But there are things you **should** know."

"First, you **should** wash your whole body before you get in. It's very important — the water has to stay clean for everyone." Jess nods. "You **shouldn't** bring your phone, and you **shouldn't** dive or splash. It's a quiet place."

"Oh, and one more thing," Sena adds, smiling. "You **should** probably tie up your hair — long hair in the water makes people cross." Jess laughs and pulls her hair back. These are *suggestions*, not laws. But Sena wants her cousin to feel welcome, so she gives her advice with **should**.

SHOULD Sena uses *should* because nobody is **forcing** Jess — these are good ideas, cultural suggestions. If Jess forgets, nobody will throw her out. It's just polite.

STORY TWO · RULES

Mateo, 14 · Madrid

Mateo is on a school trip to the Museo del Prado. His class is standing in front of a huge painting by Velázquez, and their teacher is reading a small sign on the wall out loud.

"Visitors **must** stay behind the yellow line," she reads. "You **must not** touch the paintings. You **must not** use flash photography. Food and drink **must** be left at the reception."

Mateo whispers to his friend Iker, "It's a lot of rules." Iker shrugs. "It's a museum. They have to protect the paintings." Later, Mateo sees a little girl almost touch a 400-year-old frame, and her father pulls her hand back fast. He understands now. The signs use **must** because these aren't suggestions — they are the museum's *strong* rules, written down. Breaking them has real consequences.

MUST Written rules often use *must*. In speech, people sometimes soften this to *have to* — Iker says "they **have to** protect the paintings" because he's reporting the rule, not making it.

STORY THREE · THE ADVICE COLUMN

Amara, 16 · Accra

Amara writes the advice column for her school's online magazine. Every week, students send her their problems anonymously, and she answers them. Today's letter comes from someone who calls herself "Tired in Year 11."

"My friends want to go out every weekend, but I have so much schoolwork. If I say no, they get annoyed. What **should** I do?"

Amara thinks for a long time before she writes back. "Dear Tired," she types, "you **shouldn't** feel guilty. Real friends will understand. You **should** talk to them honestly and explain what you need — maybe you can meet just on Saturday afternoons. You **shouldn't** say yes to everything just to keep everyone happy, because then **you** become the unhappy one. **Should** you study every single Saturday? No — rest is important too. Balance is key."

SHOULD An advice column runs on *should*. The writer cannot force the reader to do anything — she can only suggest, warn, and encourage. That's exactly what *should* is for.

STORY FOUR · THE SATURDAY SHIFT

Kenzo, 17 · São Paulo

It's Saturday morning. Kenzo's phone buzzes — his friends are at the beach. He reads the photo and sighs. He's at the café where he works, wiping tables at 8:30 am.

"I **have to** work every Saturday," he tells his friend Diego on the phone during his break. "I don't love it, but my boss needs me. I **have to** be here by eight. I **have to** wear this stupid green apron. And I **have to** smile at every customer even when they're rude."

Diego laughs. "Why don't you quit?" Kenzo thinks for a second. "Because I **don't have to** ask my parents for money anymore. That freedom feels good. Some obligations are worth it." He hangs up, ties his apron, and goes back to work. Tomorrow he **doesn't have to** work — tomorrow, he's free.

HAVE TO Kenzo's obligations come from his *boss*, not from him. He uses *have to* all through his description. Notice "**don't have to**" at the end — it means *not necessary*, not *forbidden*.

V Practice

Fill the blanks with the correct modal

Choose the correct modal for each sentence. Coloured tags hint at the use: should, must, have to, a negative, or a question.

LEGEND: SHOULD MUST HAVE TO NEG QUESTION

1. You look tired. You ____ get some rest. SHOULD
 - A must
 - B should
 - C have to
2. The sign says: "Passengers ____ fasten their seatbelts." MUST
 - A must
 - B should
 - C don't have to
3. My brother ____ wake up at 5 am because of his job. HAVE TO
 - A should
 - B must
 - C has to
4. You ____ eat so much sugar — it's bad for your teeth. NEG
 - A mustn't
 - B shouldn't
 - C don't have to
5. " ____ I bring anything to the party?" she asked Lina. QUESTION
 - A Must
 - B Have to
 - C Should
6. It's a holiday tomorrow, so I ____ go to school. NEG
 - A don't have to
 - B mustn't
 - C shouldn't
7. Visitors ____ feed the animals. It's forbidden. NEG
 - A must not
 - B don't have to
 - C shouldn't
8. ____ you have to work this Saturday too? QUESTION
 - A Should
 - B Do
 - C Must

VI

Speaking

Give advice & describe your rules

Your turn — five prompts

Answer with full sentences. Mix *should*, *must*, and *have to* so your partner can hear the difference.

1. What *should* a tourist do on their first day in your city? (give three tips)
2. Name three things you *have to* do every school day.
3. What is one thing you *must not* do at the dinner table in your family?
4. Give your friend three *shouldn't* pieces of advice for learning English.
5. What's the best thing about Sundays — something you *don't have to* do?

MODEL DIALOGUE — JOB INTERVIEW ADVICE

A: "I've got a job interview tomorrow. I'm so nervous. What should I wear?"

B: "You should keep it simple — something smart but comfortable. You shouldn't wear anything too bright."

A: "Do I have to bring my CV? They said they already have it."

B: "You don't have to, but you should bring a copy anyway. It looks prepared. Oh — and you mustn't be late. Set two alarms!"

VI

Writing

Your survival guide (80-120 words)

Write a short survival guide for new students at your school.

Imagine a student is starting at your school tomorrow. Write **6-8 tips** using a mix of *should*, *shouldn't*, *must*, *mustn't*, and *have to / don't have to*.

Starter: Welcome to our school! First of all, you should...

- SELF-CHECK BEFORE YOU FINISH**
- I used *should* at least twice (for advice).
 - I used *have to* at least twice (for school rules).
 - I used at least one *mustn't* or *shouldn't*.
 - My tips are in a logical order (most important first).
 - I checked my spelling and punctuation.



Mini Quiz

8 questions · final check

Test your modals — Quick Check
Choose the best answer. 8 questions.

Q1 OF 8 · FORM
Which is correct?

- A She must to study.
- B She must study.
- C She musts study.
- D She musting study.

Q2 OF 8 · ADVICE

Your friend has a bad cold. What do you say?

- A You *must* go to the doctor.
- B You *have to* go to the doctor.
- C You *should* go to the doctor.
- D You *don't have to* go to the doctor.

Q3 OF 8 · EXTERNAL RULE

"It's the law — children ____ wear a helmet when they cycle."

- A have to
- B should
- C don't have to
- D shouldn't

Q4 OF 8 · THE BIG TRAP

"Tomorrow is Saturday. I ____ go to school." (it's not necessary)

- A mustn't
- B shouldn't
- C don't have to
- D have to not

Q5 OF 8 · READING RECALL

In Story Two, what *must* visitors do at the museum in Madrid?

- A Pay an extra fee.
- B Stay behind the yellow line.
- C Bring a guide.
- D Leave their phones at home.

Q6 OF 8 · QUESTION FORM

Which question is correct?

- A You have to leave now?
- B Have you to leave now?
- C Has you to leave now?
- D Do you have to leave now?

Q7 OF 8 · FORBIDDEN

"You ____ use your phone during the exam." (= it's forbidden)

- A mustn't
- B don't have to
- C shouldn't
- D haven't to

Q8 OF 8 · THIRD PERSON

"My sister ____ work on Sundays, unfortunately."

- A have to
- B must to
- C has to
- D musts

Answer Key

PRACTICE (PART VI)

1. B 2. A 3. C 4. B 5. C 6. A 7. A 8. B

QUIZ (PART IX)

Q1. B Q2. C Q3. A Q4. C Q5. B Q6. D Q7. A Q8. C