

# Expressing Modality in English with the Modal Verb MUST

This is the sixth and last lesson in the **modal verbs** or modal **auxiliaries** [series](#).

Today, we are going to talk about the affirmative, negative and interrogative forms of **MUST**.

## REMEMBER:

- There are 9 **modal verbs** in English: **Must, Can, Could, May, Might, Will, Would, Shall** and **Should**.
- **Modal verbs** are tools that help us to express modality. In fact, **modals** allow the speaker to express his or her point of view regarding an action, an event or a situation.
- **Modal verbs** always remain the same no matter the subject and cannot be conjugated.

Moreover, they do not have **present** and **past participles**. (I ~~am~~ **must**ing go./ I ~~have~~ **musted** go.)

## MODAL VERB (MUST)

### AFFIRMATIVE FORM (FULL FORM)

I	You	He/She/It	We	You	They
<b>must</b>					

### NEGATIVE FORM (FULL AND SHORT FORMS)

I	You	He/She/It	We	You	They
<b>must not</b> <b>mustn't</b>					

### INTERROGATIVE FORM

<b>Must</b>							
I	you	he	she	it	we	you	they
<b>go?</b>							



## Step 1: Characteristics of MUST

- We mostly use the modal verb **MUST** in the present tense. (E.g. *I must go to the post office now.*)
- A verb stem always follows **MUST**. (E.g. *You must respect the rules.*) The verb stem is also known as the base of a verb. You can find examples of verb stems in the [dictionary](#).
- We do not add 'TO' after **MUST**. (E.g. *We must ~~to~~ be careful.*)
- **MUST** is able to replace auxiliary verbs such as **DO** and **BE** which help us to form questions. (E.g. *What must I do to become better in English?*)
- **MUST** can be replaced with the semi-modals **HAD TO** in the past, **HAVE TO** in the present and **WILL HAVE TO** in the future.

## Step 2: Examples of MUST in the Affirmative Form (+)

### Talking About Obligations

The speaker uses **MUST** to **express a strong sense of duty**. We can also talk about legal or moral imperatives.

**MUST** can be replaced by the [semi-modal](#) **HAVE TO**. Note that with **HAVE TO**, the obligation is imposed from outside (another person, societal rules, regulations, traditions, customs, etc). (E.g. *I have to do my homework*. The teacher says so 😊)

- I must respect the elderly.
- You must do your homework.
- He must send the email by twelve.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which the speaker **expresses obligation** using **MUST**.

### Expressing Necessity

The speaker can also use **MUST** to show that it is **necessary or required to do something**.

We can replace **MUST** with **NEED TO** here. With **NEED TO**, the obligation is less strong (E.g. *I need to see the doctor*. I think it is essential that I see the doctor. However, no one is forcing me to see the doctor).

- I must eat more vegetables.
- You must see your friends more. You will feel much better.
- We must do more sports to be healthy.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which you **express necessity** using **MUST**.

### **Making Deductions About the Present**

**MUST** can be used to say that **a situation or action is highly probable**. We have a high degree of certainty with **MUST**.

- He must be at home. His car is outside the house.
- They must (really) love each other. They are always together.
- I must have flu. I have been coughing all day.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which you **make deductions about the present** using **MUST**.

### **Making Deductions about the Past**

We can also use **MUST + HAVE-EN/ED (Present Perfect)** to **make strong guesses about the past**.

- They must have been very happy. You could tell from the way they laughed all the time.
- He must have acted like a jerk for Jane to divorce him. Normally, Jane is such a sweet woman.
- She must have cheated on him. You certainly can't trust Jane with your husband.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which you **make deductions about the past** using **MUST**.

### **Making Commands**

We can equally use the modal verb **MUST** to **give strong orders to someone**.

- You must stop singing so loudly. The whole neighbourhood is awake because of you.
- They must come back immediately.
- He must return the borrowed items with immediate effect.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which you **express strong commands** with **MUST**.

## Making Positive Suggestions or Recommendations

It is possible to use **MUST** to recommend something to someone.

- The film is absolutely nice. You must see it!
- Jack must try this recipe! It will change his life.
- You must come next summer. I promise, you'll enjoy yourself very much.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which you **make positive suggestions or recommendations to someone** using **MUST**.

## SEMI-MODAL VERB (HAVE TO)

AFFIRMATIVE FORM (FULL AND SHORT FORMS)					
I	You	He/She/It	We	You	They
have to 've to (rare)		has to 's to (rare)	have to 've to (rare)		

NEGATIVE FORM (FULL AND SHORT FORMS)					
I	You	He/She/It	We	You	They
do not have to don't have to		does not have to doesn't have to	do not have to don't have to		

INTERROGATIVE FORM							
Do		Does			Do		
I	you	he	she	it	we	you	they
have to go?							



### Step 3: Examples of MUST in the Negative Form (-)

#### Expressing Obligations

We can use **MUST + NOT** to talk about **what we cannot do because of duty**.

However, note that, here, you cannot replace **MUST NOT** with **DO NOT HAVE TO** because they do not have the same meaning. (E.g. *I do not have to go the doctor's*. (There is no need for you to go the doctor's. There is a lack of obligation.)

- I must not talk rudely to elders.
- We must not overly criticise our politicians. Sometimes, they do a good job.
- She mustn't misuse environmental resources.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which the **speaker expresses obligations** using **MUST + NOT**.

#### Expressing Prohibition

The speaker uses **MUST + NOT** to **tell someone that he or she cannot do something**.

- You must not watch TV so late at night.
- He mustn't talk to me like that.
- They must not play video games.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which the speaker **expresses prohibition** using **MUST + NOT**.

#### Making Deductions About the Present

**MUST + NOT** can be used to say that **a situation or action is highly improbable**.

- He must not be at home. His car is not outside the house.
- They must not love each other. They are always fighting.
- I must not have flu. I barely have its symptoms.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which you **make deductions about what is improbable in the present** using **MUST + NOT**.

## Making Deductions about the Past

We can also use **MUST + HAVE-EN/ED (Present Perfect)** to make strong guesses about what was very unlikely to happen in the past.

- They mustn't have been happy. You could tell from the way they cried all the time.
- He mustn't have acted like a jerk for Jane to remain with him. Normally, Jane doesn't take any nonsense from any man.
- She must not have cheated on him. Jane can't even harm a fly.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which you make deductions about what was very unlikely to happen in the past using **MUST + NOT**.

## Making Negative Suggestions or Recommendations

It is possible to use **MUST + NOT** to say that someone **had better not do something**.

- The food in this restaurant is horrible. You mustn't eat it.
- You must not go out with Jack. He is a good-for-nothing boy and he will break your heart.
- He mustn't work so hard. It's not worth ruining his health for that.

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which you make negative suggestions or recommendations using **MUST + NOT**.

## Step 4: Examples of MUST in the Interrogative Form(?)

### Asking Questions About Obligations

We can use **MUST** to inquire if we have to do something or not out of duty. We can replace this with

**DO WE HAVE TO...?**

- Must I go to bed so early? (*Do I have to go home so early?*)
- Sir, must we hand in our homework now?
- Must he really stop drinking?

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which you ask questions about obligations using **MUST**.

## Asking Questions About Necessity

Sometimes, we can use **MUST** to **ask someone if it is necessary or required to do something**.

- Must we take vitamins all the time?
- Madam, must we wait for you?
- Must I do this?

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which the subject **asks questions about necessity** using **MUST**.

## Asking for Information

We can equally use the modal verb **MUST** to get **information about what we are obliged to do or what is necessary to do**.

- What must we do exactly? (E.g. Students asking a teacher)
- How long must I take this medicine.
- When must we go?

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which the subject **asks for information** using **MUST**.

## Making Criticisms

We can use **MUST** to **express disapproval of something or someone**.

- Must you talk so loudly?
- Must this be so tough?
- Why must you rub my failure in my face?

**Your Turn:** Make 3 sentences in which the **subject criticises someone or something** using **MUST**.



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