

## Language at work

### GRAMMAR REFERENCE

#### Verbs of obligation, prohibition and permission

##### Form

Verbs of obligation, prohibition and permission (e.g. *must*, *have to*, *can't*, *can*) come before the main verb.

*Customers must pay for the product within 30 days.*

*Do I have to check out before 12.00?*

*We can't take our phones into meetings.*

*You can make short personal calls at work.*

##### Use

1 Use *must*, *have to*, *need to* for talking about obligations (e.g. rules) and necessity.

*You must wear your uniform during working hours.*

*They have to start work at three.*

*She needs to update her password by the end of the week.*

2 Use *don't have to*, *don't need to* when there is no obligation or necessity to do something.

*Employees don't have to wear an ID badge.*

*With flexitime, no one needs to start or end at a fixed time of day.*

3 Use *mustn't*, *can't*, (be) *not allowed to* for prohibition (stopping somebody from doing something).

*You mustn't leave the designated area.*

*Employees can't use the Internet during work time for personal use.*

*Visitors are not allowed to enter this area of the building without a pass.*

4 Use *can*, (be) *allowed to* for talking about and asking for permission.

*We can make personal calls from our workstations at lunchtimes.*

*You're allowed to bring your mobile phone into the lab.*

*Am I allowed to log in to the server from home?*

5 Must has no past form. Use *had to* instead.

*They must sign in at reception. (Present)*

*He had to show his passport at the security desk. (Past)*

6 With question forms about rules, use *Do I have to ...?* or *Do I need to ...?* We rarely use *must* to ask about rules.

*Does he have to lock up every day?*

*Do I need to ask for permission to leave early?*

1 **Underline** the correct verbs in *italics* to complete the sentences. In two sentences both verbs are correct.

- 1 You *need to* / *are allowed to* get a parking permit if you want to use the car park.
- 2 Employees *mustn't* / *have to* attend at least three training days per year to receive a certificate.
- 3 She *doesn't have to* / *can't* work with us if she doesn't want to. I just thought she might like to.
- 4 *Can I* / *Am I allowed to* call my family on this phone?
- 5 You *mustn't* / *don't have to* drink the water from this tap. It's only for washing hands.
- 6 The room over there is for having a coffee and taking a break. Anyone *can* / *needs to* use it.
- 7 You *aren't allowed to* / *mustn't* smoke anywhere on the premises. Go outside if you need a cigarette.
- 8 Do we *have to* / *must* wait outside until the security guard arrives with the key?

2 Rewrite the sentences starting with the words given. Use *must*, *have to*, *need to*, etc.

- 1 My job is to welcome guests and answer the phone. I have to welcome guests and answer the phone.
- 2 It isn't necessary to bring your laptop – we have one you can use. You don't \_\_\_\_\_ – we have one you can use.
- 3 This is a no-smoking area. We aren't \_\_\_\_\_ in this area.
- 4 It is forbidden to take these documents out of the building. You \_\_\_\_\_ these documents out of the building.
- 5 In theory we can't talk in the library, but everyone does. We're \_\_\_\_\_ in the library, but everyone does.
- 6 You're obliged to wear a helmet on the construction site. You \_\_\_\_\_ a helmet on the construction site.
- 7 Can I use your password to log in? Am I \_\_\_\_\_ to log in?
- 8 Is it the law to drive on the right or the left in this country? Do I \_\_\_\_\_ the left in this country?