Unit 20

Grammar

Modals 2: obligation, probability, possibility

For general information about modals, see Unit 19.

Obligation

Use	Modal	Example
Present or future obligation	*must / mustn't* *have to* *need to*	*All visitors **must** turn off their mobile phones.* *You **have to/need to** press 'send'.*
No present or future obligation	*don't have to* *don't need to* *needn't*	*You **don't have to/don't need to/needn't** pay to send an e-mail.*
Past obligation	*had to*	*Yesterday, Sam **had to** buy more stamps.*
No past obligation	*didn't have to* *didn't need to*	*I learnt a little Italian, but everyone spoke English, so I **didn't have to/didn't need to** use it.*

Helpful hints

In spoken English, *have to* is more common than *must*. *Must* is often used in written notices and instructions.

✓ *'We **have to** pay the phone bill today,' Rita said.*
✓ *Passengers **must** turn off all mobile phones.*

Watch out!

Mustn't and *don't have to* do not mean the same.
✓ *You **mustn't** do that!* (= Don't do that!)
✓ *You **don't have to** do that.* (= You can do that if you want to, but it's not necessary.)

Probability and possibility

Use	Modal	Example
Present strong probability	*must* *can't* *couldn't*	*The phone is ringing – it **must** be Simon.* *This letter **can't/couldn't** be from Japan because it's got a French stamp.*
Present and future probability	*should* *ought to*	*We **ought to/should** hear from Cheryl this weekend.*
Present and future possibility	*could* *may* *might*	*I'm not sure what language it is – it **could/may/might** be Polish.*

Helpful hints

We often use *must*, *can't* and *couldn't* for probability when we have some evidence for our opinion.

✓ *I just rang Paul, but there's no answer. He **must** be out.*

Watch out!

To talk about possibility and probability about the past, we use a modal and the perfect infinitive. See Unit 22.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

A Choose the sentence (A, B or C) which means the same as the first sentence.

1 We have to pay the electricity bill before Friday.
A We can pay it if we want to.
B We must pay it.
C We've already paid it.

2 You don't need to buy me a birthday present.
A You must buy me a birthday present.
B It's not necessary to buy me a birthday present.
C You mustn't buy me a birthday present.

3 I have to do some work on my project this evening.
A I haven't got time to do the work.
B I've already done the work.
C I need to do the work.

4 Lenny didn't have to see the head teacher after all.
A It wasn't necessary for Lenny to see the head teacher.
B Lenny went to see the head teacher.
C Lenny is waiting to see the head teacher.

5 Students mustn't run in school buildings.
A They can run if they want to.
B Students don't like running.
C Running isn't allowed.

6 All passengers must fasten their seatbelts.
A They have to fasten their seatbelts now.
B They don't have to fasten their seatbelts.
C They can fasten their seatbelts.

7 Mr Reed had to go to the police station to answer some questions.
A Mr Reed was able to go to the police static
B Mr Reed forgot to go to the police station.
C Mr Reed was obliged to go to the police station.

8 It's kind of you to offer to help, but you really don't need to.
A I don't want you to help me.
B Your help isn't necessary.
C You won't be able to help me.

B Circle the correct word or phrase.

1 'Smoking isn't allowed in the airport.'
You **mustn't / don't have to** smoke in the airport.

2 'It's not necessary to come to the train station to meet me.'
You **have to / don't have to** meet her at the train station.

3 'We were forced to wait for over two hours in the rain!'
They **had to / didn't need to** wait for over two hours in the rain.

4 'The instructions tell you to write in pencil.'
You **must / needn't** write in pencil.

5 'You can contact us by either phone or e-mail.'
You **mustn't / don't have to** phone them.

6 'In my country, you can carry your passport with you if you want, but it's not necessary.'
In her country, you **don't need to / mustn't** carry your passport with you.

7 'My grandfather was made to start work when he was just fourteen years old.'
He **had to / must** start work when he was just fourteen years old.

8 'It's not necessary to book a hotel; you can stay in our spare room.'
You **mustn't / don't have to** stay in a hotel.

C Complete using the correct form of *have to*. You may have to use some negative forms.

1 Jade can't come out tonight. She ..... look after her little brother.
2 I didn't have enough money, so I ..... borrow some from Yuri.
3 It's raining really hard, but luckily we ..... go out this evening.
4 To start the laptop you ..... press the power button.
5 Robbie worked last weekend, but I ..... .
6 .....you ..... go to piano lessons when you were younger?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

D Match the sentences with the explanations. You have to use some of the explanations more than once.

1 'Someone is at the door. It must be Mrs Johnson from next door.' .....
2 'Lena might not know where the cinema is.' .....
3 'Dad should know what the capital of New Zealand is.' .....
4 'Greg can't be in the final! He's a terrible player!' .....
5 'The dog is wet. It must be raining outside.' .....
6 'We may go to the Canary Islands for Easter.' .....
7 'Ken must like that film. He's seen it six times!' .....
8 'Barry ought to be able to cook Chinese food. He lived there for two years.' .....

A I'm almost certain.
B It's probable.
C Maybe / Perhaps.

E Rewrite the sentences using the words given.

1 You're expecting David to ring. The phone rings. **must**
.....

2 Anna is a better runner than Rula. You think Anna will probably win the race tomorrow. **should**
.....

3 A letter arrives. It's possible that it's from your cousin, Janice. **could**
.....

4 There's a knock at the door. Your mum says it might be Colin, but you know Colin is on holiday. **can't**
.....

5 You see someone wearing a costume. You think there's a strong probability that she's going to a fancy-dress party. **must**
.....

6 Your sister is looking for her hairbrush. You think it's possible that it's in the living room. **might**
.....

7 You're waiting for Harriet to arrive. You think she'll probably be there in half an hour. **should**
.....

8 You're talking about why James seems to be sad. You think it's possible he's in trouble at school. **could**
.....

LIVEWORKSHEETS