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?

LIVEWORKSHEETS