

# Modals of Advice and Expectation: Should, Ought to, and Must

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: Giving recommendations, Negative advice, Opinions, Expectations, and Probability

## 1. Giving Advice and Opinions (Should / Shouldn't)

We use **should** and **shouldn't** to give advice, make recommendations, or talk about what is the "right" or "correct" thing to do.

- **Affirmative:** Subject + **should** + verb (base form).
  - *Example:* You **should eat** more vegetables. (It is a good idea).
- **Negative:** Subject + **should not (shouldn't)** + verb.
  - *Example:* You **shouldn't smoke**. (It is a bad idea).
- **Question:** **Should** + subject + verb...?
  - *Example:* **Should I buy** this shirt? (Asking for an opinion).

### "I think" and "I don't think"

We often use **I think** or **I don't think** to introduce our opinion.

- **Correct:** I **don't think** you **should go** out tonight.
- **Incorrect:** ~~I think you shouldn't go out tonight.~~ (Native speakers usually make "think" negative, not "should").

## 2. Ought to

**Ought to** means the same as **should**, but it is slightly more formal and less common in questions or negatives.

- *Example:* You **ought to say** sorry. (= You should say sorry).

## 3. Expectations, Probability, and "Something is not right"

We use **should** when we expect something to happen because it is logical or normal. We predict that something is true.

- **Prediction:** He left work 30 minutes ago. He **should be** home soon.
- **Something is not right:** If a situation is different from what we expect, we can use **should**.
  - *Example:* The price is wrong. It **should be** \$10, not \$20.

## 4. Should vs. Must vs. Have to (Strength)

It is important to understand the strength of your words.

- **Should / Ought to:** Advice. It is a good idea, but you have a choice.
  - *Example:* You **should wear** a helmet. (It's safer).
- **Must / Have to:** Obligation or Law. You have no choice.
  - *Example:* You **must wear** a seatbelt. (It is the law).

## Practice Exercises

**Instruction:** Complete the sentences using **should**, **shouldn't**, or **ought to** and the verb in parentheses. Usually, *should* is the best choice for general advice. Use **must** only if the context implies a strict rule or law.

1. You look very tired. I think you \_\_\_\_\_ (go) to bed early tonight.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ (we/invite) Sarah to the party? She might be busy.
3. The roads are very icy. You \_\_\_\_\_ (not/drive) so fast.
4. He trained very hard for the race, so he \_\_\_\_\_ (win) easily today.
5. This soup is too salty. It \_\_\_\_\_ (not/taste) like this.
6. Where \_\_\_\_\_ (I/put) this box? In the kitchen or the bedroom?
7. You \_\_\_\_\_ (ought to/apologize) to your sister for breaking her phone.
8. Passengers \_\_\_\_\_ (must/show) their passports at the border control. It is mandatory.
9. I don't think you \_\_\_\_\_ (spend) so much money on clothes.
10. The movie starts at 8:00 PM. We \_\_\_\_\_ (not/be) late, or we will miss the beginning.
11. If you want to lose weight, you \_\_\_\_\_ (eat) less sugar and exercise more.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ (they/bring) a gift to the wedding? Is it expected?
13. The bus left ten minutes ago, so it \_\_\_\_\_ (arrive) at the station by now.
14. You \_\_\_\_\_ (not/believe) everything you read on the internet.
15. What do you think? \_\_\_\_\_ (he/accept) the job offer in London?

## Answer Key

1. **should go** (Advice)
2. **Should we invite** (Asking for opinion)
3. **shouldn't drive** (Negative advice)
4. **should win** (Prediction/Expectation)
5. **shouldn't taste** (Something is not right/normality)
6. **should I put** (Asking for instruction/opinion)
7. **ought to apologize** (Formal advice equivalent to should)
8. **must show** (Strong obligation/Rule - *Have to* is also acceptable)
9. **should spend** (Note: The negative is in "I don't think", so the modal remains positive in form, though the meaning is negative advice.)
10. **shouldn't be** (Advice/Recommendation)
11. **should eat** (Advice)
12. **Should they bring** (Asking for social norm/expectation)
13. **should arrive** (Probability/Expectation)
14. **shouldn't believe** (Negative advice)
15. **Should he accept** (Asking for opinion)