

Be Supposed To: Expectations and Obligations

INTERMEDIATE

Focus: Saying what people believe, Reporting rumors, Contrast with facts, Planned actions, Intended situations, Unfulfilled expectations, Rules and regulations, Advice against actions, Social norms

We use the structure **be supposed to + verb** to talk about obligations, expectations, and general beliefs. It is very common in spoken English.

1. Expectations and Arrangements (Planned Actions)

We use this to talk about things that are arranged, intended, or expected to happen.

- *Example:* The train **is supposed to leave** at 10:00 AM. (It is on the schedule.)
- *Example:* I **am supposed to work** tomorrow, but I feel sick.

Past Tense (Unfulfilled Expectations):

When used in the past (**was/were supposed to**), it often implies that the expected action did **not** happen.

- *Example:* He **was supposed to call** me last night, but he forgot.

2. Rules and Prohibitions (Not Supposed To)

We use the negative form (**not supposed to**) to talk about things that are not allowed or advice against doing something. It is a polite way to say "don't do that."

- *Example:* You **are not supposed to park** here. (It is against the rules.)
- *Example:* We **are not supposed to eat** in the library.

3. Reputation and Rumors (General Beliefs)

We use this to talk about what many people say or believe about something (rumors or public opinion). It often contrasts what people say with the real facts.

- *Example:* This restaurant **is supposed to be** the best in the city. (People say it is good.)
- *Example:* That movie **is supposed to be** very scary.

4. Form

Type	Structure	Examples
Affirmative (+)	Subject + be + supposed to + verb	She is supposed to arrive soon.
Negative (-)	Subject + be + not + supposed to + verb	You are not supposed to smoke here.
Question (?)	Be + Subject + supposed to + verb...?	Are we supposed to wait here?

Note: Always remember to change the verb **be** (*am, is, are, was, were*) depending on the subject and the tense (*present or past*).

Practice

Instructions: Complete the sentences using the correct form of **be supposed to** and the verb in parentheses. Pay attention to the subject and the time (present or past).

1. This new computer game _____ (be) excellent, according to the reviews.
2. You _____ (not/walk) on the grass. It is strictly forbidden.
3. What time _____ (the movie/start)? I don't want to be late.
4. I _____ (finish) this report yesterday, but I didn't have enough time.
5. _____ (we/bring) a gift to the party, or is it casual?
6. Sarah _____ (help) her mother in the garden this afternoon. It's the plan.
7. Visitors _____ (not/take) photos inside the museum. There is a sign on the door.
8. Where _____ (I/put) these boxes? In the kitchen or the garage?
9. The weather _____ (be) sunny today, but it is raining heavily.
10. _____ (John/be) at the meeting right now? I don't see him.
11. We _____ (not/tell) anyone about the surprise party. Keep it a secret!
12. It _____ (snow) in London tomorrow. That is the forecast.
13. Why _____ (you/not/wear) a uniform? Everyone else is wearing one.
14. The flight _____ (land) ten minutes ago. Has it arrived yet?
15. Japanese food _____ (be) very healthy. That is the general opinion.

Answer Key

1. **is supposed to be** (Reputation/Belief)
2. **are not supposed to walk** (Prohibition/Rule)
3. **is the movie supposed to start** (Expectation/Schedule)
4. **was supposed to finish** (Unfulfilled Expectation - Past)
5. **Are we supposed to bring** (Social Norm/Question)
6. **is supposed to help** (Arrangement/Plan)
7. **are not supposed to take** (Prohibition/Rule)
8. **am I supposed to put** (Instruction/Question)
9. **was supposed to be** (Contrast with fact/Unfulfilled - Past or Present context implying "it was predicted") *Note: "is supposed to be" is also acceptable if referring to the current forecast despite the rain.*
10. **Is John supposed to be** (Expectation/Question)
11. **are not supposed to tell** (Prohibition/Advice)
12. **is supposed to snow** (Expectation/Prediction)
13. **aren't you supposed to wear / are you not supposed to wear** (Rule/Negative Question)
14. **was supposed to land** (Unfulfilled Expectation - Past)
15. **is supposed to be** (Reputation/Belief)