

# Must

## Introduction



All visitors **must** wear hard hats.

## Definition

**Must** is a modal auxiliary verb which has different uses.

## Construction

affirmative: subject + 'must' + **bare infinitive**

You **must** go.

negative: subject + 'must' + 'not' + **bare infinitive**

You **mustn't** go.

interrogative: 'must' + subject + **bare infinitive**

**Must** you go?

**Note that** like other modal auxiliaries, **must** has no infinitive and we use the same form with 'I', 'you', 'he', 'she', 'it', 'we' and 'they'.

## Uses

Use	Examples
Necessity	You <b>must</b> work hard if you want to succeed. The company <b>must</b> improve its sales figures next year.

<b>Obligation - when there is a rule or requirement.</b>	<p>Visitors <b>must</b> report to reception.                  All drivers and passengers <b>must</b> wear seatbelts.                  All meetings <b>must</b> begin and end on time.</p>
<b>Strong advice, including to oneself. This is stronger than <b>should</b>.</b>	<p>You're ill and you're not getting better; you <b>must</b> go to the doctor's.                  I <b>must</b> remember to phone him back.</p>
<p><b>Deduction - when we believe something is certain.</b></p> <p>The negative form is 'can't'.</p>	<p>You <b>must</b> be tired - you work so hard all the time.                  That <b>must</b> be the postman at the door - I'm expecting a parcel.</p> <p>"How old is she?" "Well, she started work a few years before me so she <b>must</b> be about 40."</p>
<b>To talk about the best or right thing to do. [a strong opinion]</b>	<p>Banks <b>must</b> tell customers in advance about charges.                  The government <b>must</b> spend less money.</p>
<b>To be emphatic with an invitation.</b>	<p>You <b>must</b> come and see us sometime.</p>

**Deduction**

For deduction, the opposite of **must** is 'can't'.

That **must** be the postman at the door.

That **mustn't** be the postman at the door - it's too early. ❌

That **can't** be the postman at the door - it's too early. ✅

You **can't** be cold - it's 30° and you're wearing a coat.

It **can't** be easy having four young children and a full-time job.

**'Must', 'should' or 'will' for deduction**

These are used in the same way but with different levels of certainty. For example, someone hears a knock on the door at the time that the postman usually arrives and says:

That **should** be the postman. [It's probably the postman but it could be someone else.]

That **must** be the postman. [I'm certain it's the postman but there's a possibility that it isn't.]

That'll be the postman. [I have no doubt at all that it's the postman.]

## Questions with 'must'

We are more likely to use 'have to' to ask a question because questions with 'must' have an additional meaning. They can suggest a rebuke, disapproval or disappointment:

- Must** you wear the same coloured shirt everyday? It's so boring.
- Must** we have another meeting? I've got much more important things to do today.
- Must** you go? We'll miss you.

In order to show similar strong feelings using 'have to', we can emphasise the word 'have' and maybe add 'really'.

- Do I **have to** go with you, mum? I'd much rather stay here with my friends.
- Do I **really have to** go with you, mum? I'd much rather stay here with my friends.

## 'Must' or 'have to'

They have the same general meaning but are sometimes used in different ways.

For necessity, 'must' is often used in formal situations - spoken or written. For example, in a formal announcement or a written notice. In everyday conversation, we use 'have to'.

So, if you hear 'must' in conversation, it is being used emphatically or as advice, including to oneself.

For example:

'Must' for necessity [formal or emphatic]	'Have to' for necessity [conversation]
All visitors to this site <b>must</b> wear protective clothing.	"We <b>have to</b> wear protective clothing at work."
ID cards <b>must</b> be shown before entering.	"Oh, look. We <b>have to</b> show our ID cards before we go in."
"Sorry, but I <b>must</b> leave the meeting early today. Is that OK?" ❌	"Sorry, but I <b>have to</b> leave the meeting early today. Is that OK?" ✅
"Arnaud won't be at the meeting next week. He <b>must</b> go to Paris to see a client." ❌	"Arnaud won't be at the meeting next week. He <b>has to</b> go to Paris to see a client." ✅

<p>"You really <b>must</b> eat less if you want to get into that dress for the wedding."</p>	
<p>"You <b>must</b> finish that before Friday or we'll lose the contract."</p>	
<p>'Must' for advice - telling yourself what you should do.</p>	
<p>"I <b>must</b> go to the bank today." [I should have gone last week but I've been busy. I'm going on holiday tomorrow so if I don't get my foreign currency today, it will be too late!]</p>	<p>"I <b>have to</b> go to the bank today." [I have an appointment or I need to get some money, etc.]</p>
<p>"I <b>must</b> stop drinking wine every evening - I'm not sleeping very well at the moment!"</p>	<p>"The doctor told me I <b>have to</b> stop drinking wine while I'm taking these tablets."</p>
<p>"I <b>must</b> start looking for a new job - I just don't enjoy working here anymore."</p>	<p>"I <b>have to</b> find a new job by January when this contract finishes."</p>
<p>"I <b>mustn't</b> forget to call Louise today."</p>	

## Past and future tenses

**Must** can be replaced with 'have to' for the past or future. For example:

All delegates **must** arrive at the conference one hour before it begins.  
 Tom couldn't come to the meeting so we **had to** arrange another date.  
 We **will have to** postpone the launch until next month.

## Some common expressions

Expression	Meaning	Example
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<b>You <b>must</b> be joking.</b>	<b>When we don't want to believe what we hear or we want to refuse, or deny something strongly.</b>	<b>"The phones aren't working again." "You <b>must</b> be joking! That's the third time this week."  "Do you like Juan?" "You <b>must</b> be joking; he isn't my type at all."</b>
<b>Mustn't grumble</b>	<b>A response to questions like "How are you?" that means everything is ok - not great, but not bad either.</b>	<b>"Hi, how are things with you?" "Oh, not bad, <b>mustn't</b> grumble."</b>

## Examples



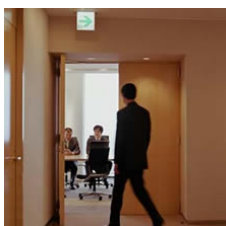
Learners **must** complete their e-learning if they want to make progress.



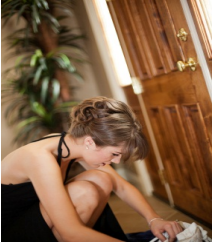
You **must** pay a 10% deposit now and the balance in six weeks.



You **mustn't** eat so many burgers! You **must** eat more healthily.



I **must** try to relax and not appear too nervous.



My keys **must** be in here - I can't find them in the usual place.



The company **must** do something about these disappointing results. We **must** all make sure this doesn't happen again next year.



You **mustn't** park on double yellow lines in England.



This is great - you **must** come and see us again soon.



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