

Should / Shouldn't

"Should" is most commonly used to make recommendations or give advice. It can also be used to express obligation as well as expectation.

Examples:

- When you go to Berlin, you **should** visit the palaces in Potsdam. (*recommendation*)
- You **should** focus more on your family and less on work. (*Advice*)

Ought to

"Ought to" is used to advise or make recommendations. "Ought to" also expresses assumption or expectation as well as strong probability, often with the idea that something is deserved. "Ought not" (without "to") is used to advise against doing something, although Americans prefer the less formal forms "should not" or "had better not."

Examples:

- You **ought to** stop smoking. (*recommendation*)
- Jim **ought to** get the promotion. (*It is expected because he deserves it*).

Have to

"Have to" is used to express certainty, necessity, and obligation.

Examples:

- This answer **has to** be correct. (*certainty*)
- The soup **has to** be stirred continuously to prevent burning. (*necessity*)
- They **have to** leave early. (*obligation*)

Must

"Must" is most commonly used to express certainty. It can also be used to express necessity or strong recommendation, although native speakers prefer the more flexible form "have to." "Must not" can be used to prohibit actions, but this sounds very severe; speakers prefer to use softer modal verbs such as "should not" or "ought not" to dissuade rather than prohibit.

Examples:

- This **must** be the right address! (*certainty*)
- Students **must** pass an entrance examination to study at this school. (*necessity*)
- You **must** take some medicine for that cough. (*strong recommendation*)