



## Mixed Modals:

# Negative Modals: Mustn't vs Don't Have To, Needn't & Tricky Contrasts Exercises

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

- You \_\_\_ enter this area without a safety helmet. It's against the regulations.  
a) mustn't  
b) don't have to  
c) needn't  
d) shouldn't
- You \_\_\_ come to the party if you're busy. It's completely optional.  
a) mustn't  
b) don't have to  
c) can't  
d) shouldn't
- You'd \_\_\_ not be late for the interview. They are very strict about punctuality.  
a) rather  
b) prefer  
c) better  
d) like
- The doctor said I \_\_\_ eat less salt, but it's not critical.  
a) must  
b) mustn't  
c) had better  
d) should
- You \_\_\_ bring any food. We've already prepared everything for the picnic.  
a) needn't  
b) mustn't  
c) can't  
d) shouldn't
- I'd rather \_\_\_ at home tonight than go to the cinema.  
a) to stay  
b) stay  
c) staying  
d) stayed
- That \_\_\_ be true! I saw him in London just yesterday, so he can't be in Tokyo now.  
a) mustn't  
b) shouldn't  
c) can't  
d) may not
- Passengers \_\_\_ use electronic devices during take-off and landing.  
a) do not have to  
b) need not  
c) should not  
d) must not
- You \_\_\_ worry about the exam. You've studied hard and you'll do fine.  
a) needn't  
b) mustn't  
c) can't  
d) don't
- We'd better \_\_\_ soon, or we'll get stuck in rush-hour traffic.  
a) to leave  
b) leave  
c) leaving  
d) left





## Answers

1. a) mustn't
2. b) don't have to
3. c) better
4. d) should
5. a) needn't
6. b) stay
7. c) can't
8. d) must not
9. a) needn't
10. b) leave
11. c) can ... mustn't
12. d) didn't speak
13. a) mustn't
14. b) don't need to
15. c) must
16. d) shouldn't
17. a) have
18. b) must
19. c) don't have to
20. d) must



# Explanations

## 1. “mustn't” (a)

Use 'mustn't' for strict prohibition. Entering without a safety helmet is forbidden by regulations. 'Shouldn't' would be a recommendation, and 'don't have to' means it's not required (the opposite meaning).

## 2. “don't have to” (b)

Use 'don't have to' when there is no obligation — it's your choice. The word 'optional' confirms that attendance is not required. 'Mustn't' would mean coming to the party is forbidden.

## 3. “better” (c)

Use 'had better not' for strong advice with an implied negative consequence. Being late could cost you the job opportunity. 'Would rather not' expresses a personal preference, not a warning.

## 4. “should” (d)

Use 'should' for moderate advice without urgent consequences. 'It's not critical' tells us this is a gentle recommendation. 'Must' would imply urgent necessity, and 'had better' implies a warning of consequences.

## 5. “needn't” (a)

Use 'needn't' when something is not necessary because it's already taken care of. Food has been prepared, so bringing more is unnecessary. 'Mustn't' would mean bringing food is prohibited.

## 6. “stay” (b)

Use 'would rather + bare infinitive' (without 'to'). 'I'd rather stay' is the correct form. 'Would rather' is always followed by the base form of the verb, not the to-infinitive or -ing form.

## 7. “can't” (c)

Use 'can't' for a strong negative deduction based on logic and evidence. If someone was in London yesterday, being in Tokyo now seems logically impossible. 'Mustn't' is used for prohibition, not deduction.

## 8. “must not” (d)

Use 'must not' for strict prohibition, especially in official rules and safety regulations. Using devices during take-off and landing is prohibited for safety reasons.

## 9. “needn't” (a)

Use 'needn't' to tell someone that worrying is unnecessary. The speaker is reassuring the listener that there is no reason to worry. 'Mustn't' would forbid them from worrying, which is unnatural.

## 10. “leave” (b)

Use 'had better + bare infinitive'. 'We'd better leave' is the correct form. Like 'would rather', 'had better' is always followed by the base form of the verb.

## 11. “can ... mustn't” (c)

Use 'can' for something that is allowed (taking photos) and 'mustn't' for something that is forbidden (flash photography). The museum allows cameras but prohibits flash because it damages artwork.

## 12. “didn't speak” (d)

Use 'would rather + subject + past simple' when expressing a preference about what someone else does. 'I'd rather you didn't speak' uses the subjunctive past tense, not present tense, even though the meaning is about the present or future.

**13. “mustn't” (a)**

Use 'mustn't' for clear prohibition, especially when a sign or rule explicitly forbids the action. 'Keep Off the Grass' is a prohibition, not just advice.

**14. “don't need to” (b)**

Use 'don't need to' when something is not necessary right now. Since the deadline is next Friday, there is no urgency to finish today. 'Mustn't' would mean finishing today is forbidden.

**15. “must” (c)**

Use 'must' for a strong positive deduction. If the story contradicts the evidence, the speaker is almost certain the person is lying. 'Might' would be too uncertain given the strong contradiction.

**16. “shouldn't” (d)**

Use 'shouldn't' for advice against doing something. Skipping breakfast is not forbidden (mustn't) or impossible (can't) — it's simply not recommended. 'Shouldn't' conveys that it's not a good idea.

**17. “have” (a)**

Use 'would rather + bare infinitive'. 'Would you rather have...?' is the correct question form. The base form 'have' follows 'would rather' directly, without 'to'.

**18. “must” (b)**

Use 'must' for absolute rules with no exceptions. 'There is absolutely no exception' makes it clear this is a strict legal requirement, not just advice (should) or a strong recommendation (had better).

**19. “don't have to” (c)**

Use 'don't have to' when something is not necessary because there is an alternative. The speaker can take a taxi, so being picked up is not required. 'Mustn't' would mean it's forbidden.

**20. “must” (d)**

Use 'must' for a strong deduction based on evidence. A dark, silent house strongly suggests the children are sleeping. The evidence is conclusive enough for a confident deduction.