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When we want to express *permission*, *prohibition* (not allowing something), *obligation* or *no obligation*, we use [modal verbs](#).

When talking about obligations (what you have to do), we use the modal verbs '**have to**' and '**must**'. There is a slight difference between the way they are used.

- *She **must** stay in bed until her back is better.*
- *George **has to** go to New York on business.*

Note: To express a mild obligation or [advice](#), we can use '*should*'.

- You *should* visit your grandma.

To express a recommendation or moral obligation, we can use 'ought to':

- You *ought to* drive carefully in bad weather.

Remember that modal verbs are always followed by a *base form of a verb* - an [infinitive](#) verb without *to*.

## Must

The verb '**must**' expresses *stronger* and shows us that the obligation comes from the speaker. It isn't a law or a rule.

- *I **must** stop smoking. (I really need to)*
- *I **must** call my dad tonight.*
- *You **must** come and visit us the next time you come here.*

We form positive statements with 'must' like this:

## subject + must + the verb

Singular	Plural
<i>I <b>must go</b></i>	<i>We <b>must go</b></i>
<i>You <b>must go</b></i>	<i>You <b>must go</b></i>
<i>We/she/it <b>must go</b></i>	<i>They <b>must go</b></i>

- *I **must call** my sister this evening.*
- *All visitors **must go** to the reception first.*

## Have to

The verb '**have to**' expresses an obligation due to circumstances or outside factors (e.g. laws, agreements, other people's orders, etc.). It's a law or a rule and the speaker can't change it.

- *I **have to** stop smoking. (doctor's orders)*

We form positive statements with 'have to' like this:

### subject + have/has to + the verb

Singular	Plural
<i>I <b>have to go</b></i>	<i>We <b>have to go</b></i>
<i>You <b>have to go</b></i>	<i>You <b>have to go</b></i>
<i>He/she/it <b>has to go</b></i>	<i>They <b>have to go</b></i>

- *We **have to wait** here for a taxi.*
- *Mary **has to start** work at 8am.*

## Must vs Have to

Here's a summary of differences between 'must' and 'have to':



Watch this video from Oxford Online English to learn how to use 'must', 'have to' and 'should' correctly:

## Talking about obligation in the past

There is no past form of '*must*', so to talk about obligation in the past we use '*had to*'.

**had to + base form of the verb**

- *I had to work late last night.*

## Talking about obligation in the future

There is no future form of '*must*' so we use '*have to*':

**will have to + base form of the verb**

- *I will have to work late last night.*

Read more on this topic:

[Modal Verbs for Obligations: Negative and Questions](#)

[Modal Verbs for Suggestion and Advice](#)

[Modal Verbs for Necessity \('Need'\)](#)