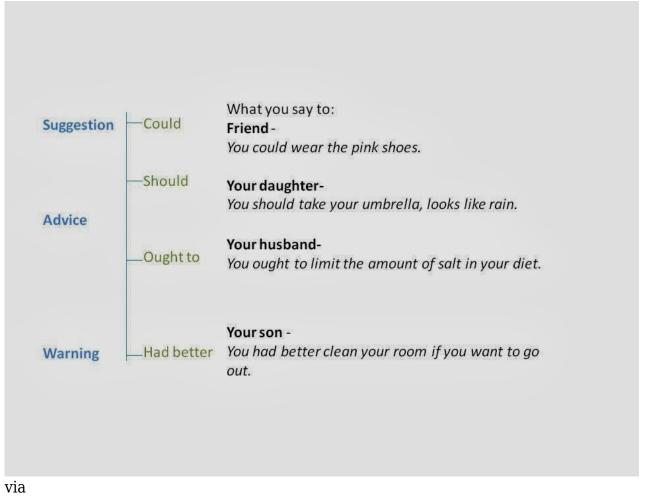


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Modal verbs are very common and useful in English. We use them to talk about *ability, permission, obligation, requests, offers, suggestions* and *more*. To give suggestions and advice we can use the modal verbs '*could*', '*should*', '*ought to*', '*had better*'.



 $http://learningglobalenglish.blogspot.com/2014/01/giving-advice-with-could-should-ought.ht\,ml$



Remember that modal verbs are always followed by a *base form of a verb* – an <u>infinitive</u> verb without *to*.

Should

'**Should**' is used when the speaker wants to make a *strong suggestion*:

- The sun is shining bright, so you **should wear** a cap.
- You look pale. I don't think you **should go** to school today.
- The road is wet. You **shouldn't drive** too fast.

Should + have

We use **should have + <u>past participle</u>** to talk about things we regret, when we feel sorry about something that happened or did not happen in the past.

- I should have called you sooner.
- I shouldn't have shouted at her.

Ought to

In more formal situations you can use '**ought to**' instead of '*should*', but this modal verb is not used in negative statements and questions:

- You ought to (should) wear a scarf. It's very cold outside.
- They **ought to hurry**, their train is leaving.
- Jane ought to visit that castle, it's great!

Note: Both '*should*' and '*ought to*' are used to express advice, obligation or duty. BUT: We use '*should*' when we want to express our *subjective opinion*. In other words, 'what I think is best for you to do'.

- You should call your mother more often.

'**Ought to**' is used when we want to express an *objective truth*. In other words, 'what is necessary, and cannot be avoided'. That's why we usually use 'ought to' when we are talking about laws, duties and regulations.



- They ought to follow the school's policy, or they will get expelled.

Had better

If you want to give an important piece of advice, warning or recommendation (that can have a negative consequence if not followed), use '*had better*':

- You had better (You'd better) leave for work, it's 8 o'clock already.
- We'd better go that way, we'll save about 10 minutes.
- *He'd better* park his car correctly or he will get fined.

Note: Had better is a strong expression. We use it if we think there will be *negative results* if someone does not do what is desired or suggested.

Here's how '*had better*' relates to other modal verbs with similar meaning:

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Could

'**Could**' is not as strong as 'should' and is normally used to give *mild advice* or to suggest a *solution* to some problem:

- - I hate my old jeans!
- - Well, you could buy a new pair.
- If they need more space, they **could look** for a bigger house.
- Jack moves to Canada next month. He **could learn** to play hockey there.

Here's a good video from American English about modal verbs to express advice:

Read more about modal verbs:

Modal Verbs for Possibility

Modal Verbs for Deduction

Modal Verbs for Ability



Modal Verbs: Permission, Requests and Offers

Modal Verbs for Obligations: Statements