



Must, Mustn't and Didn't Have To

Must means we have no choice about doing something. We are obliged to do it.

Read this conversation between two friends and look for examples of *must*.

Joe: Andy? Hi! I got the job! I start next month.

Andy: Congratulations!

Joe: Thanks. The only problem is that **I must buy a car**. The factory isn't on a bus route.

Andy: Yes, I told you! I know you don't want to buy one, but it's time you had a car anyway.

Joe: Well, if I buy one, **you must come and help me choose**. I don't know much about cars.

Andy: I'd be happy to. What kind do you want to buy?

Joe: A Ferrari of course! It's the King of cars.

Andy: Ha, ha! **You must be joking!** You've spent so much money in the last few weeks you'll be lucky if you can afford a bicycle!

Joe: Yeah. I know. **I must try to spend less money**. Oh, well, not a Ferrari, then! **But it must have a powerful engine and a good stereo system**. Oh yes! **My dog, Wolfie, must like it as well!!**

Andy: Ha ha! Yeah, sure! Oops! **I must go!** Suzy's coming for dinner and my place is a mess. Well done on getting the job.

Joe: Thanks! Bye!

Andy: Bye.

Must and *have to* are very similar in meaning.

I must buy a car. / I have to buy a car.

Have to is also used when we are talking about something impersonal. The law, the government, the workplace etc may say it is necessary for someone to do something.

Joe: *I'll have to wear a uniform in my new job. And I have to pass a safety exam.* (These are workplace rules.)

Must is often used in speaking when we are giving orders. We use it when we are telling someone else what we think is very important for them to do.

You must study very hard for your safety exam!

You must drive carefully. The roads are icy today.

Must is also used in rules:

Candidates who fail the safety exam must wait three months before applying to retake it.



When we want to say that we are **not** allowed to do something, we use *mustn't*.

I mustn't drink and drive. (It's the law.)

I mustn't spill food on the carpet or Suzy will kill me! (My girlfriend says I am not allowed to drop food on the carpet.)

We can't use *don't have to* in this situation. (*Don't have to* means that it is unnecessary for us to do something.)

~~I don't have to drink and drive.~~ Incorrect

~~I don't have to spill food on the carpet or my girlfriend will kill me!~~ Incorrect

There is no past tense for *must*. When we want to use *must* in the past, we use *had to*.

Before I owned a car, I had to take the bus to work.

I had to wait at the bus stop in the wind and the rain. Now I can drive to work and not get wet!

Exercise

Joe has been in his new job for two weeks. He meets Andy for a drink at a bar. Complete the gaps in the dialogue below with *must* / *mustn't* or *had to*.

Andy: Hey! How are you?

Joe: Fine. What are you having?

Andy: An orange juice, thanks. I'm so hot. I 1. _____ have something cold.

Joe: Oh and I 2. _____ pay you back that money I borrowed from you. Remember? I owe you \$50.00.

Andy: Oh thanks. So how is the job?

Joe: Fine. There were a lot of new things to learn. When I first started, I 3. _____ be really careful. But now, it's good. I'm enjoying it. Oh and can you remind me to leave here at 7.30? I 4. _____ be at the airport at 9 o'clock to meet Suzy. She's been visiting her parents in Toronto.

Andy: O.K. I'll remind you at 8.00!

Joe: Oh. That's not funny. You 5. _____ say things like that! Suzy will kill me if I'm late. Hey, and how's Haruka?

Andy: She's fine.

Joe: Say! We 6. _____ meet for dinner sometime. The four of us!

Andy: Good idea. But you 7. _____ tell Haruka any stories about our high-school days! She might drop me!

Joe: I won't.

Wolfie: Woof!



Answers: 1. must, 2. must, 3. had to, 4. must, 5. mustn't, 6. must, 7. mustn't.

