

Beginner

# The Use of Must, Mustn't and Needn't

## RULES AND EXAMPLES

1. Using **must**, **mustn't** and **needn't**.

a) We can use **must** to mean that it is necessary to do something:

Examples:

1. Don't tell anybody what I said. You **must** keep it a secret.
2. We haven't got much time. We **must** hurry.

b) You **mustn't** do something = it is necessary that you do *not* do it (so don't do it):

Examples:

1. You **must** keep it a secret. You **mustn't** tell anybody else. (= don't tell anybody else)
2. We **must** be very quiet. We **mustn't** make any noise.

c) You **needn't** do something = you don't need to do it (but you can if you like):

Examples:

1. You can come with me if you like, but you **needn't come** if you don't want to. (= it is not necessary for you to come)
2. We've got plenty of time. We **needn't** hurry. (= it is not necessary to hurry)

2. Instead of **needn't**, you can use **don't/doesn't need to**. So you can say:

We **needn't** hurry. or We **don't need to** hurry.

Remember that we say **don't need to do**, but **needn't do** (*without to*).

3. **Needn't have** (done)

Example:

Paul had to go out. He thought it was going to rain, so he took the umbrella. But it didn't rain, so the umbrella was not necessary. So he **needn't have taken** it.

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He **needn't have taken the** umbrella = He took the umbrella, but this was not necessary.

Compare **needn't** (do) and **needn't have** (done):

1. Everything will be OK. You **needn't worry**. (it's not necessary)
2. Everything was OK. You **needn't have worried**. (you worried, but it was not necessary)

4. **Didn't need to** (do) and **needn't have** (done)

I **didn't need to** ... = it was not necessary for me to ... (and I knew this at the time):

Examples:

1. I **didn't need to** get up early, so I didn't.
2. I **didn't need to** get up early, but it was a lovely morning, so I did. (I **didn't have to** ... is also possible in these examples.)

I **needn't have done** something = I did it, but *now I know* that it was not necessary:

Example:

I got up very early because I had to get ready to go away. But in fact it didn't take me long to get ready. So, I **needn't have to got** up so early. I could have stayed in bed longer.