

MUST: USES

(Modal Verb)

DEDUCTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

When we think carefully about facts, we often use *must* to express deductions and conclusions from these:

- *He's so small.* [fact]
- *He must be no more than four years old.* [deduction/conclusion]

[Two teachers talking about a student]

A: *He falls asleep in class every morning.* (fact)

B: *He must be out late every night or maybe he works at night.*
(deduction/conclusion)

Warning:

We use *can't/cannot* as the negative of *must* to deny something or make negative deductions or conclusions:

- *It just can't be true. He can't have left his job.*
- *That cannot be his sister. She looks so different.*

Warning:

We use *must have + ed* form and *can't have + ed* form to talk about deductions in the past. They always refer to deduction, not obligation:

[A wanted to talk to B so she phoned him but he didn't answer the phone. She phoned again the next day]

A: *I called you yesterday around three o'clock but you must have been out.*

B: *We must have been in the garden. That's a pity.*

[A is telling B about his illness]

A: *I spent a month in hospital before I was able to walk.*

B: *That can't have been easy for you.*

OBLIGATION AND NECESSITY

Must expresses strong obligation and necessity:

- *I must talk to you about the new project.*
- *Seat belts must be worn even in the back of the car.*
- *There must be a minimum of two members of the company at the meeting.*

Warning:

We use *had to* not *must* to express obligation and necessity in the past:

- *By the time we got back to our bikes, it was dark and we had to cycle home in the dark without any lights ...*
 - Not: ... it was dark and we must cycle home in the dark ...
- *Last year, teachers had to make a report on each child every week.*
 - Not: Last year, teachers must make a report ...

We use *must* to talk about the future in the past when we report speech or people's thoughts in formal contexts:

[Extract from a novel]

- *The pain was back in full force, but she knew she must not give in to it. She must go on day by day.*

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AFFIRMATIVE FORM

Must comes first in the verb phrase (after the subject and before another verb):

- *She must have lots of friends.*

Must can't be used with another modal verb.

- *This must be your sister.*
 - Not: ~~This must can be your sister.~~ or ~~This can must be your sister.~~

NEGATIVE FORM

The negative form of *must* is *mustn't*. We don't use *don't* / *doesn't* / *didn't* with *must*:

- *There mustn't be any rubbish left.*
 - Not: ~~There doesn't must be any rubbish left.~~

We can use the full form *must not* in formal contexts or when we want to emphasise something:

- *You must not leave any rubbish.*

QUESTION FORM

Warning:

The subject and *must* change position to form questions. We don't use *do/does/did*:

- *Must you make that noise?*
 - Not: ~~Do you must make that noise?~~

We can use *must* and *mustn't* in question tags though tags with *must* aren't very common:

- *The house must be worth millions, mustn't it?*