

# Must mustn't needn't

## A Must and mustn't

You **must** do something = it is necessary that you do it:

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

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

- You **must** keep it a secret. You **mustn't** tell anyone. (= don't tell anyone)
- We **must** be very quiet. We **mustn't** make any noise.

## B Needn't and don't need to

You **needn't** do something = it's not necessary to do it (but you can if you like):

- We've got plenty of time. We **needn't** hurry. (= it is not necessary to hurry)
- Joe can stay here. He **needn't** come with us. (= it is not necessary for him to come)

You can also use **don't/doesn't need to**:

- We **don't need to** hurry.

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

## C Needn't have (done)

Study this example situation:

Paul and Sue decided to go to a restaurant. They reserved a table.

They **needn't have reserved** a table. = They reserved a table, but this was not necessary.

But the restaurant was almost empty. So they **needn't have reserved** a table.

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

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

## D Needn't have (done) and didn't need to (do)

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

- Why did he get up at 5 o'clock? He **needn't have got** up so early. He could have stayed in bed longer.

He **didn't need to** do something = it was not necessary to do it. It doesn't matter whether he did it or not:

- He **didn't need to** get up early, so he didn't.
- He **didn't need to** get up early, but it was a beautiful morning, so he did.

**He didn't have to ...** is also possible in these examples.

### 32.1 Which is correct?

- 1 We haven't got much time. We must / ~~mustn't~~ hurry. (must is correct)
- 2 We've got plenty of time. We mustn't / don't need to hurry.
- 3 I have to talk to Gary. I must / mustn't remember to call him.
- 4 I have to talk to Gary. I mustn't / needn't forget to call him.
- 5 There's plenty of time for you to make up your mind. You mustn't / don't need to decide now.
- 6 We needn't / mustn't wash these tomatoes. They've already been washed.
- 7 This is a valuable book. You must / needn't take good care of it and you mustn't / don't need to lose it.
- 8 A: What sort of house do you want to buy? Something big?  
B: Well, it mustn't / needn't be big – that's not so important. But it must / mustn't have a nice garden – that's essential.

### 32.2 Complete the sentences. Use **needn't** + one of these verbs:

ask    come    explain    leave    walk

- 1 We've got plenty of time. We needn't leave yet.
- 2 I can manage the shopping alone. You ..... with me.
- 3 We ..... all the way home. We can get a taxi.
- 4 Just help yourself if you'd like more to eat. You ..... first.
- 5 I understand the situation perfectly. You ..... further.

### 32.3 Write two sentences for each situation. Use **needn't have** in the first sentence and **could have** in the second (as in the example). For **could have**, see **Unit 27**.

- 1 Why did you rush? Why didn't you take your time?  
You needn't have rushed. You could have taken your time.
- 2 Why did you walk home? Why didn't you take a taxi?  
.....
- 3 Why did you stay at a hotel? Why didn't you stay with us?  
.....
- 4 Why did she phone me in the middle of the night? Why didn't she wait until the morning?  
.....
- 5 Why did you shout at me? Why weren't you more patient?  
.....
- 6 Why did you leave without saying anything? Why didn't you say goodbye to me?  
.....

### 32.4 Correct the sentences where necessary.

- 1 We have plenty of time. We don't need hurry. We don't need to hurry.
- 2 You must keep it a secret. You mustn't tell anybody else. OK
- 3 I'll be all right. You needn't to worry about me. ....
- 4 You mustn't wait for me. You go on and I'll join you later. ....
- 5 You don't need to keep these emails. You can delete them. ....
- 6 I needn't have gone out, so I stayed at home. ....
- 7 I needn't have bought eggs. We had some already. ....