

Should is an auxiliary verb - a modal auxiliary verb. We use **should** mainly to:

- give advice or make recommendations
- talk about obligation
- talk about probability and expectation
- express the conditional mood
- replace a subjunctive structure

Structure of **should**

The basic structure for **should** is:

subject	+	auxiliary verb <i>should</i>	+	main verb
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Note that:

- The auxiliary verb **should** is invariable. There is only one form: **should**
- The **main verb** is usually in the *base* form (*He should **go**.*).

Look at the basic structure again, with positive, negative and question sentences:

	subject	auxiliary <i>should</i>	<i>not</i>	main verb <i>base</i>
+	He	should		work.
-	You	should	not	go.
?	Should	we		help?

Note that the main verb is sometimes in the form:

- *have* + *past participle* (*He should **have gone**.*)
- *be* + *-ing* (*He should **be going**.*)

The main verb can never be the *to-infinitive*. We cannot say: ~~*He should to go.*~~

There is no short form for **should**, but we can shorten the negative **should not** to **shouldn't**.

Use of **should**

should for advice, opinions

We often use **should** when offering advice or opinions (similar to **ought to**):

- You should see the new James Bond movie. It's great!
- You should try to lose weight.
- John should get a haircut.
- He shouldn't smoke. And he should stop drinking too.
- What should I wear?
- They should make that illegal.
- There should be a law against that.
- People should worry more about global warming.

People often say "They should...do sthg." Usually, the "they" is anonymous and means the government, or the company, or somebody else - but not us! Here are some examples:

- They should fix this road.
- They should have more staff in this shop.

- They should have abolished this tax years ago.

should for obligation, duty, correctness

Another use of **should** (also similar to **ought to**) is to indicate a kind of obligation, duty or correctness, often when criticizing another person:

- You should be wearing your seat belt. (obligation)
- I should be at work now. (duty)
- You shouldn't have said that to her. (correctness)
- He should have been more careful.
- Should you be driving so fast?

should for probability, expectation

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MORE ABOUT SHOULD

1. To give advice, a recommendation or a suggestion

This is to say that it is the right thing to do or the correct thing.

- Does your tooth still hurt? You **should** make an appointment with the dentist.
- I think you **should** study for the test so that you don't fail.
- Your hair is too long. You **should** get a haircut.
- You really **should** go to the new restaurant on Main Street.

2. Expresses that a situation is likely in the present

- Mary **should** be at home by now. Give her a call.
- He **should** have the letter by now. I sent it a couple of weeks ago.

3. Expresses that a situation is likely in the future (prediction)

- They **should** win the game because they are a much better team.
- I posted the cheque yesterday so it **should** arrive this week.
- It **should** be fine tomorrow.

4. Expresses an obligation that is not as strong as *Must*.

Sometimes **Should** is used instead of **Must** to make rules, orders or instructions sound more polite. This may appear more frequently on formal notices or on information sheets.

- On hearing the fire alarm, hotel guests **should** leave their room immediately.
- Passengers **should** check in at least 2 hours before departure time.
- You **should** never lie to your doctor.
- You **should** pay more attention in class.
- You **should** be at work before 9.

All of the above example sentences can have **must** instead of **should** making the obligation stronger and less polite.

5. Was expected in the past but didn't happen (should + have + past participle)

This expresses the idea that the subject did not fulfill their obligation in the past or did not act responsibly.

- You **should have** given your boss the report yesterday when he asked for it.
- I **should have** studied more but I was too tired.

6. Not fulfilling an obligation (should + be + verb-ing)

This expresses the idea that the subject is not fulfilling their obligation or is not acting sensibly.

- You **should be wearing** your seatbelt. (The person isn't wearing one right now)
- We **should be studying** for the test. (We are not studying right now and we should)

7. Sometimes *should* is replaced by *ought to* without a change in meaning.

Note that *ought to* sounds more formal and is used less frequently.

- You **ought to** study more. (= you **should** study more)
- He **ought to** go home. (= He **should** go home)
- They **ought to** stop doing that. (= They **should** stop doing that)

Shouldn't

We use *shouldn't* to advise not to do something, usually because it is bad or wrong to do.

- You **shouldn't** throw your litter onto the street.
- We **shouldn't** leave without saying goodbye.
- He **shouldn't** play with those wires if he doesn't know what he is doing.
- Are you tired? You **shouldn't** work so much.
- You **shouldn't** talk like that to your grandmother.

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Modal Verbs

Should

Uses of **Should**:

Advice or Suggestion

- Your hair is too long. You **should** get a haircut.

Situation likely in the present

- Mary **should** be at home now. Give her a call.

Likely in the future (prediction)

- They **should** win tonight, they're a better team.

Should + have + past participle

Meaning: The subject did not fulfill their obligation in the past or did not act responsibly.
- You **should have given** your boss the report yesterday when he asked for it.

Should + be + verb-ing

Meaning: The subject is not fulfilling their obligation now or is not acting sensibly.
- You **should be wearing** your seatbelt.
- We **should be studying** for the test right now.

SHOULD vs. OUGHT TO

Should can be replaced by **ought to** without a change in meaning.
- You **ought to** study more. =
- You **should** study more.
Note: **ought to** sounds more formal than **should** and is used less frequently.

We use **SHOULDN'T** to advise **not** to do something, usually because it is bad or wrong.

- You **shouldn't** throw your litter onto the street.
- He **shouldn't** play with those wires if he doesn't know what he is doing.
- You **shouldn't** work so much.

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