

Must mustn't needn't

A

Must mustn't needn'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 anybody else. (= don't tell anybody else)
- We **must** be very quiet. We **mustn't** make any noise.

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

- 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)
- We've got plenty of time. We **needn't** hurry. (= it is not necessary to hurry)

B

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*).

C

Needn't have (done)

Study this example situation:



Paul had to go out. He thought it was going to rain, so he took the umbrella.



later

But it didn't rain, so the umbrella was not necessary. So he **needn't have taken** it.

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)**:

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

D

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):

- I **didn't need to** get up early, so I didn't.
- 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:

- 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 got up** so early. I could have stayed in bed longer.

32.1 Complete the sentences using **needn't** + the following verbs:

ask come explain ~~leave~~ tell 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 We can keep this a secret between ourselves. We anybody else.
- 6 I understand the situation perfectly. You further.

32.2 Complete the sentences with **must**, **mustn't** or **needn't**.

- 1 We haven't got much time. We must hurry.
 - 2 We've got plenty of time. We needn't hurry.
 - 3 We have enough food at home, so we go shopping today.
 - 4 Gary gave me a letter to post. I remember to post it.
 - 5 Gary gave me a letter to post. I forget to post it.
 - 6 There's plenty of time for you to make up your mind. You decide now.
 - 7 You wash those tomatoes. They've already been washed.
 - 8 This is a valuable book. You look after it carefully and you lose it.
- 9 A: What sort of house do you want to buy? Something big?
 B: Well, it be big – that's not so important. But it have a nice garden – that's essential.

32.3 Read the situations and make sentences with **needn't have**.

- 1 Paul went out. He took an umbrella because he thought it was going to rain. But it didn't rain.
He needn't have taken an umbrella.
- 2 Linda bought some eggs when she went shopping. When she got home, she found that she already had plenty of eggs. She
- 3 A colleague got angry with you at work. He shouted at you, which you think was unnecessary. Later you say to him: You
- 4 Brian had money problems, so he sold his car. A few days later he won some money in a lottery. He
- 5 We took a camcorder with us on holiday, but we didn't use it in the end.
 We
- 6 I thought I was going to miss my train, so I rushed to the station. But the train was late and in the end I had to wait twenty minutes.

32.4 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 leave without saying anything? Why didn't you say goodbye?
