

- English Grammar in Use (Grammar Addition to the Textbook English for Pharmacy and Medical Bioanalytics)
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- Suggestion and Advice

Modals of Suggestion and Advice:

Should, Ought to, Had better

Introduction

These three verbs are **modal verbs**.

- should
- ought to
- had better

Modal verbs are helping/auxiliary verbs that express ideas like **ability, advice, and obligation**.

Many modal verbs have more than one meaning.

They are always followed by the simple form of a verb. For example:

Amanda should go to the doctor.

This shows that we think it is a good idea for Amanda to visit the doctor.

Let's learn how to give advice!

English speakers use the modal verbs **“should,” “ought to” and “had better”** to express that they think something is a good (or a bad) idea.

“Should” is the most common way to give advice.



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Look at the following examples:

Affirmative	Negative	Question
A: I failed my test. B: Really? You should study harder.	Young children shouldn't watch violent TV shows.	I have a problem. Should I call my parents or my friend?
A: It's really cold outside. B: You ought to wear a warm jacket.	(“ought to” is rarely used in the negative form) You ought not to watch TV before finishing your homework.	(“ought to” is not common in question form)
A: You had better slow down . You are driving too fast!	You had better not forget to pay your tuition. If you do, the university will kick you out!	(“had better” is not usually used in question form)

There is a difference in the **negative form** as well. You can make a contraction only with the verb *should*, not the other two (see examples below). Also, note the position of the word *not* in the negative sentence below. The word *not* goes after *should* and *had better* but in the middle of *ought to* (“ought not to”).

Negative Sentence	Contraction
You should not put hot water on a burn.	You shouldn't put hot water on a burn.
You ought not to put hot water on a burn.	<i>(There is no contraction.)</i>
You had better not put hot water on a burn.	<i>(There is no contraction.)</i>

These examples have the same basic advice message, but **“had better”** is a **bit stronger**. It includes the idea of a warning: **something bad will happen if you do not follow my advice**. For example:

You **had better** not forget to pay your tuition. If you forget, the university will kick you out
You **had better** do your homework. If you do not do your homework, the teacher will give you a low mark.

Note: “You had better...” can be contracted to become “You'd better....” This is **correct** grammar, and very common in speaking.

Some native speakers say, “You better ...,” but this is **incorrect**. The “had” is necessary in good grammar.



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In the above examples, you can see that the modals are followed by the simple form of a verb in these patterns.

Subject + modal + basic verb + ... ➔ You should study harder.

You should *to* study harder. ➔ **Wrong!**

You had better *slowing* down. ➔ **Wrong!**

She ought to *to* drink more water. ➔ **Wrong!**

Remember that “**ought to**” is a modal verb and is followed by a simple verb. The “to” is not an infinitive “to.”

Modal + subject + basic verb + ...?? ➔ Should I call my parents or my friend?

WH- (information) questions can also be formed by putting the WH- question word immediately before the modal.

For example:

What should I do about my problem?

Where should we have dinner tonight?

Why should you believe them?

When should they call their boss?

Summary

Should – my opinion

You **should** finish your homework before you go out.

The builders **should** have finished by the end of the week.

Should – in wh-questions

Who **should** I pass the message to? (*in wh- questions*)

What **should** I do if I have any problems?

Should – giving advice to myself

I **should** read the script on the train tomorrow but I know that I'll be too tired.

I **should** wash my hair tonight, I haven't washed it for a week!



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Ought to – obligation

You **ought to** finish your homework before you go out. (*it is your obligation*)

The builders **ought to** have finished by the end of the week. (*it is their obligation, contract limit*)

Had better – urgency, demand, threat, worry

There's someone moving about downstairs. We **had better** call the police, quickly.

He **had better not** be late again or he'll be in trouble.

Damn. It is pouring down. We had better get a taxi or we'll get soaked.

Practice

Exercise 1

Complete each sentence with an appropriate modal.

1. My teacher told me that I _____ review my notes every day. I guess it's a good idea to look at them after class.
2. Do you think Carol _____ save her money or spend it? She is planning to go to Europe this summer.
3. I'm going to a party tonight. What _____ I wear: a dress or black pants?
4. Our car's gas tank is almost empty. We _____ fill it up with gas soon or we will run out of gas!
5. If you are worried about getting fat, you _____ eat at McDonald's every day. You _____ eat healthy, low-fat foods like fruits and vegetables.
6. It's really raining outside right now. I _____ forget my umbrella or I'll get wet!
7. Where _____ we have lunch today: at home or in a restaurant?
8. My doctor feels that I _____ exercise more because I'm out of shape and want to lose weight. I think he's right.



Exercise 2

Write sentences to give advice. Use the verb and the information in parentheses.

1. What should I do if someone's heart stops beating? (do CPR)
2. What should I do if someone is bleeding a lot? (apply a bandage and put pressure on the wound)
3. What should I do if someone has a sprain? (put ice and a bandage on the joint)
4. What should I do if someone is choking and can't breathe? (do abdominal thrusts)
5. What should I do if someone has a bee sting? (remove the stinger)
6. What should I do if someone goes into shock? (lay the victim on his back and elevate his legs)

Exercise 3

Find the errors in the sentences. Write the sentences correctly.

1. He ought take him to the emergency room.
2. You should to help people.
3. He has better do CPR.
4. They ought to not hurt his leg.
5. I had not better put hot water on the burn.

(Answer key. Exercise 1: 1. ought to, 2. should, 3. should, 4. had better, 5. should not, should, 6. had better not, 7. should, 8. ought to
Exercise 2: 1. You should do CPR. 2. You should apply a bandage and put pressure on the wound. 3. You ought to put ice and a bandage on the joint. 4. You had better do abdominal thrusts. 5. You had better remove the stinger. 6. You ought to lay the victim on his back and elevate his legs. Exercise 3: 1. ought, 2. should, 3. shouldn't, 4. ought not to, 5. ought to)

*„Our favourite attitude **should** be gratitude.“ Zig Ziglar*

*„Beer makes you feel the way you **ought to** feel without beer.“ Henry Lawson*

*„A book or poem which has no pity in it **had better** not be written.“ Oscar Wilde*



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