Will
Hello, and welcome to today's Grammar Gameshow! I'm your host, Will! Run, run as fast as you can, you can't catch me, I'm the Grammar Gameshow man! And of course let's not forget Leslie, our all-knowing voice in the sky.

Leslie
Hello, everyone!

Will
Tonight, we're going to ask you three questions about...

Leslie
'Should'. That handy modal so often used for advice!

Will
OK! Now, let's meet our contestants!

Bill
Hello, all. My name's Bill.

Will
And contestant number two?

Sal
Hello Will! And hello, everyone at home. It's so great to be here tonight! I'm your contestant Sal! Here for your viewing pleasure on the one, the only, the spectacular, Grammar Gameshow!

Will
Well, goodness, Sal. That was quite an intro.

Sal
Isn't he fantastic? Let's give him a hand. Thanks Will. I used to host a game show myself for many years. And what great times they were.
Will
An old hand, eh? Great! OK. Let's get going and don't forget, you can play along at home too. Like many modal verbs, 'should' has a variety of meanings. Explain the use of 'should' in these sentences. 'Should I get the cheap one or the expensive one?'

Bill
Well, that's 'should' to ask for advice or make a suggestion.

Leslie
Correct!

Will
She's out but she shouldn't be much longer.

Sal
That's 'should' for something probable or expected.

Leslie
Correct!

Will
Everyone should wear a seat belt when driving.

Bill
Well, that's 'should' for advice again.

Leslie
Incorrect!

Will
Wow. You got that one spectacularly wrong. Really nose over toes there!

Sal
Isn't he fantastic? But a good TV host should never tell a guest they've got something wrong without softening it first. Just like this. Bill, that was a fair guess, but you got it wrong. Bad luck. But here's a high-five for trying. Boom!

Will
Yes. Thank you Sal. I'll take that one under advisement. Leslie?

Leslie
Good job! Or maybe wrong! I forget now! Anyway, 'should' is a modal verb meaning it doesn't change for person or time, and is always followed by a bare infinitive. It can be used to offer advice and make suggestions, talk about probabilities based on what is expected or logical and refer to obligations - such as, 'Everyone should wear a seat belt when driving' – though it's not as strong as 'must'.
Will
Well done. Two points each. Now it's time to...

Sal
Hold up a sec! What a champion! What poise! What precision! But here's a quick note from someone who's walked the walk before. Why not try it like this. Great play everyone, amazing performance! Two points each!

Will
OK Sal. Nice idea. I'll bear that one in mind. Let's move on to round two. 'Should' is a modal verb and so has no past form. How, then, can we use 'should' in the past?

Bill
Don't we use 'should' plus 'have' plus a past participle verb?

Leslie
Correct!

Will
Well done, Bill. And for a bonus point, what functional use does it have?

Bill
It's used to talk about past actions that either were or weren't a good idea.

Leslie
Correct!

Sal
He got the bonus point! Well done Bill! You're a star! Hit it!

Bill
You shouldn't have done that!

Will
Sal, out of respect for a peer, I am going to let that one slide. But that is your last warning. Leslie?

Leslie
Well done, Bill! We can combine 'should' with 'have' and a past participle to talk about actions that either weren't a good idea or would have been, but didn't happen. This is useful for criticising someone. For example, 'You shouldn't have done that!' Or for talking about regrets. For example, 'I should have listened to my mother more.'

Will
Well done, Bill. You get the bonus point. Hit it! Oh... Well, that one's ruined now! On to
our last round. The verb phrase 'had better' is similar to 'should'. But there are some important differences. Look at these sentences and correct the ones which are wrong.

A) Both are followed by a bare infinitive.  
B) Both can be used to give advice.  
C) Both are the same degree of intensity.  
D) Neither includes a sense of consequence.

Sal  
C) is wrong. 'Had better' is more immediate and urgent than 'should'.

Leslie  
Correct!

Bill  
I think D) is also incorrect. Doesn't 'had better' include a sense of worry or danger of negative consequence if the advice is not followed?

Leslie  
Correct!

Will  
Tell them, Leslie.

Sal  
Leslie, my best buddy and pal!

Will  
My best buddy and pal.

Leslie  
Wow folks! What a guy! 'Should' and 'had better' have similar meanings. Both are followed by a bare infinitive, and both can be used to give advice. However, 'had better' is a little more immediate and intense. When we use 'had better', there is an, often unspoken, sense of a negative consequence if the advice is not followed. This also makes 'had better' useful when delivering threats. For example, 'Sal, you had better stop poking that bear with that stick.'

Sal  
Isn't he great folks? Let's hear it for your favourite voice in the sky... it's Leslie.

Will  
Alright, that's the conjunction that broke the syntax. Bill you win. The prize is a boat or something. And Sal?
Sal
Maybe you should try having a catchphrase. Something like… waah!

Will
Nope! That's a little too long-winded for me! Release the unsatisfied audience. And Leslie?
Do the goodbye bit.

Leslie
Sawadee ka, Leslie!

Will
There, see you next time!