
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

The Grammar Gameshow

Modal verbs: must and have to

Will

Hello, and welcome to today's Grammar Gameshow! I'm your host, Will, but I'm no has been! 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

Have to and must. Those two little expressions that are to do with obligation and make all the rules!

Will

OK! Now, let's meet our contestants!

Simone

Hi, everyone. I'm Simone!

Will

And contestant number two?

Mya

Hello, everyone. I'm Mya!

Will

Welcome back, Mya! OK! Let's get going. And don't forget you can play along at home too. Our first question is multiple choice. Which of these uses of 'have to' and 'must' is different from the others?

- a) You must wear your seatbelt.
- b) You have to wear your seatbelt.
- c) You mustn't wear your seatbelt.
- d) You don't have to wear your seatbelt.

Simone

D is different because it describes a voluntary action

Will

Leslie?

Leslie

You're not wrong there, Simone. 'Must', 'mustn't' and 'have to' all talk about obligations - for example, rules that you need to follow. But 'don't have to' is the opposite - the actions it describes are voluntary. Such as, Will doesn't have to give anyone any points! He's the boss!

Will

True! But, since I'm nice! Simone, you can have two points. And Mya, I liked your 'thinking face' there, two points to you!

Simone

Hang on! That's not fair. Why does...

Will

Fingers on the buzzers. Here comes question two! True or false: There is no difference between 'have to' and 'must' for obligations.

Simone

False!

Will

Leslie?

Leslie

It is false! Although many use them interchangeably, in fact, we use 'have to' for external obligations, and 'must' for internal obligations.

Will

OK. One point for that. Now for the quick fire part. Based on what Leslie has just told us, tell me if these obligations would take 'have to' or 'must'. You decide not to smoke.

Mya

I mustn't smoke.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

The government wants you to pay your taxes.

Simone

We have to pay taxes.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

You don't want to exercise, but the doctor tells you to.

Mya

I have to exercise.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

You want to brush your teeth more.

Simone

I must brush my teeth more.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

You try to resist eating chocolate.

Mya

I mustn't eat chocolate.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

Your parents tell you to do homework.

Simone

I have to do homework.

Leslie

Correct!

Will

Well done both of you. Have 13 points between you. It's time for our final question: 'Must' and 'have to' are modal verbs. But why is 'have to' different from other modal verbs?

Simone

Trick question! All modal verbs are followed by a bare infinitive verb so there is no difference.

Will

Leslie?

Leslie

It's true that all modals, including 'must' and 'have to', are followed by a bare infinitive. But that's not our answer.

Will

Ouch, Simone. You crashed and burned there. Mya, I can offer it to you.

Mya

Is it because modal verbs don't change their form, but 'have to' does?

Will

Leslie?

Leslie

Absolutely right! Unlike other modal verbs, 'have to' changes to show person – for example, 'have to', 'has to' – and time – for example, 'had to', 'didn't have to'. Its meaning doesn't change though.

Will

Good job Mya. You know, I'm taking 20 points away from Simone for stupidity, and giving them to you.

Simone

No!

Will

Well that brings us to the end of today's Grammar Gameshow. Let's count out the points. And the winner is... Mya with 37 and a half. Well done! Here's what you've won!

Leslie

It's a cuddly toy!

Will

You've finally got a friend! We'll see you again next week, where you can play for an even bigger prize. And, Simone, what happened? You were doing so well!

Simone

Well, to be honest I...

Will

Unleash the sheep. It looks like we'll need another contestant. Thanks for joining us. Say goodbye, Leslie.

Leslie

Goodbye, Leslie.

Will

See you next time!