BBC Learning English
Grammar Challenge
'Should have'

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Catherine's Grammar Explanation: 'Should have' + past participle for advice about the past

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Task for challenger: Matt had a job interview recently, but he wasn't successful. What did he do wrong?

Matt: I didn't get the job. It's my own fault really, I should've prepared more carefully for the interview.

Elena: And you should've worn a clean shirt. And you shouldn't have been late!

Hi Sylvia! Don't worry, we're here to help you! Matt made 3 mistakes at his job interview. Firstly, he wasn't very well prepared, secondly, he didn't wear a clean shirt and thirdly, he was late!

When we want to talk about mistakes we made in the past, we can use 'should have' with a past participle, like this:

Matt: *It's my own fault really, I should've prepared more carefully for the interview.*

Did you hear it? *Should - have - prepared*. Matt **didn't** prepare for the interview, but now he realizes that was a mistake. Did you notice the way he shortens 'should have' to 'should've'? Listen again:

Matt: *I should've prepared more carefully for the interview.*

Elena uses both a positive and negative form of *should have* with a past participle to give her opinion of events in the past. Remember, Matt wore a dirty shirt and he was late for his interview.

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Elena: *And you should've worn a clean shirt. And you shouldn't have been late!*

Positive: *should've worn;* negative: *shouldn't have been*

So, if we want to give advice or opinions about past events which didn't go so well, we can use 'should have' or 'shouldn't have' with a past participle, to talk about where we went wrong.

That's all from me, _____, good luck with your grammar challenge!

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Grammar Tables: 'Should have' + past participle for advice about the past

When we want to talk about mistakes we made in the past, we can use 'should have' with a past participle.

Positive & negative

Subject	should have / shouldn't have	past participle	
Matt	*should've*	*prepared*	*more carefully for the interview.*
He	*should have*	*worn*	*a clean shirt.*
They	*shouldn't have*	*been*	*late.*

Question form

Should / shouldn't	subject	have	past participle	
Should	*Matt*	*have*	*prepared*	*more carefully for the interview?*
Should	*he*	*have*	*worn*	*a clean shirt?*
Shouldn't	*they*	*have*	*arrived*	*early?*

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