Core Meanings

- • MUST expresses strong obligation, necessity, or logical deduction.
- • NEED expresses necessity, but is generally weaker and often optional or context-dependent.

Obligation: Must

- • Used for strong, non-negotiable rules.
- Examples:
- – You must submit the report by midnight.
- – All candidates must follow the instructions.

Must: forms

Affirmative (+) form

Must comes first in the verb phrase (after the subject and before another verb):

> She **must** have lots of friends.

Must can't be used with another modal verb.

> This **must** be your sister.

> Not: ~~This must can be your sister~~. or ~~This can must be your sister~~.

Negative (−) form

The negative form of *must* is *mustn't*. We don't use *don't/doesn't/didn't* with *must*:

> There **mustn't** be any rubbish left.

> Not: ~~There dosen't must be any rubbish left~~.

We can use the full form *must not* in formal contexts or when we want to emphasise something:

> You **must not** leave any rubbish.

Obligation: Need

- • Used for practical necessity, without force or authority.
- Examples:
- – You need to recharge the battery.
- – She needs to rest after the operation.

"Need is a semi-modal verb because in some ways it is like a modal verb and in other ways like a main verb."
- Cambridge Dictionary

Need as a Modal (Rare, Formal)

- • Used mainly in negative and interrogative forms.

- Examples:

- – Need you make so much noise?

- – You needn't worry about the exam.

Need: form

Affirmative form

Affirmatives with the semi-modal *need* are not common and they are used in formal contexts. There is almost always a negative word (e.g. *no one, nobody, nothing*) or phrase in the clause, even if the verb phrase is affirmative:

*No one **need** think that we are doing this every week.* (we are not doing this every week)

*Nobody **need** know the name of the person who made the complaint.*

*Not a thing **need** change on this page.*

Need comes first in the verb phrase (after the subject and before another verb):

*Let's forget about it. No one **need** know about it.*

We can't use another modal verb with *need*:

*No one **need** read this.*

Not: ~~No one need must read this~~. or ~~No one must need read this~~.

Warning:

We form the negative by adding *not* after *need*. *Need not* can be contracted to *needn't*. We don't use *don't/doesn't/didn't* with the semi-modal verb *need*:

You **need not** spend a lot of money on presents. (formal) (or You needn't spend a lot of money on presents.)

Not: ~~You don't need spend a lot of money on presents~~.

Must vs. Needn't vs. Don't Need to

- • MUST NOT = prohibition.
- • NEEDN'T = lack of necessity (the action is not required, but allowed).
- • DON'T NEED TO = no obligation, more common in modern English.

- Examples:
- – You must not enter this area. (Prohibited)
- – You needn't call me. (Optional)
- – You don't need to call me. (Optional, more neutral)

Need in Questions & Negatives

- • NEED (modal) is rare, mostly British and formal.
- Examples:
- – Need I say more?
- – You needn't apologize.