

Unit 33

Must, mustn't, needn't and needn't have

a Must, mustn't, and needn't

(You) **must** (do) means that it is necessary that you do something:

You haven't got much time. You must hurry.
You can tell Tom what I said but he must keep it a secret.

(You) **mustn't** (do) means that it is necessary that you do *not* do something:

The baby is asleep. You mustn't shout. (= It is necessary that you do *not* shout.)
You can tell Tom what I said but he mustn't tell anybody else. (= It is necessary that he *doesn't* tell anybody else.)

(You) **needn't** (do) means that it is *not necessary* to do something:

You've got plenty of time. You needn't hurry. (= It is not necessary to hurry.)
I can hear you quite clearly. You needn't shout. (= It is not necessary to shout.)

b Instead of needn't you can use don't/doesn't need to:

- **You've got plenty of time. You don't need to hurry.**

Remember we say 'don't need **to** hurry', but 'needn't hurry' (without **to**).

c Needn't have (done)

Study this example situation:

Tom wanted to catch a train. He left home late, so he hurried to the station. But the train was also late - it didn't leave until 20 minutes after Tom arrived at the station.

Tom needn't have hurried (because the train was late).

'Tom **needn't have hurried**' means that he hurried *but it wasn't necessary*.

We use **needn't have** to say that someone did something but it wasn't necessary:

- **Ann bought some eggs but when she got home she found that she already had plenty of eggs. So she needn't have bought any eggs.**
- **Thank you for doing the washing-up but you needn't have done it really. I was going to do it later.**

d Didn't need to is different from needn't have.

We use **didn't need to** (and 'didn't have to') to say that an action was unnecessary. This was known at the time of the action:

- **I didn't need to go, so I didn't go.**
- **I didn't need to go but I decided to go anyway.**

When we use **needn't have**, it was *not known* at the time that the action was not necessary:

- **I needn't have gone.** (= I went - this was unnecessary, but I didn't know at the time that it was unnecessary.)