



“Have to” vs “Must”

Compare and explain the
difference...



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ETAP 550

Must vs. Have to (Englishclub.com)

- Must is a **modal auxiliary verb**.
- Structure: Subject + **must** + main verb
- Example: I **must** sleep.
*I **must to** sleep.
- Have to is a **main verb**.
- Structure: Subject + **have** + to infinitive
- Example: I **have to** read this this textbook for school.

What is the difference?

- **Must** I use Google Slides to present this information?
- Do I **have to** use Google Slides to present this information?

Must and Have to

- They are both used “to express obligation or necessity” (gymglish.com)
- Must is more appropriate in the context of personal “feelings”. What does the speaker *believe* they are obliged to do?
- Have to is more appropriate in the context of “impersonal ideas” (such as rules). What is the speaker obliged to do *for/by* an external agent?
- Example: “Must I wear a tie?” vs. “Do I have to wear a tie?”

What is the difference?

- **Must** I use Google Slides to present this information?
- Do I **have to** use Google Slides to present this information?

Must vs. Have to “obligations”

- **Must is subjective** (i.e. the opinion, idea, or “internal feeling” of the subject/speaker).
- Describes what the subject *thinks* they are obliged to do.
- Example: I must eat more lean meat.

- **Have to is objective** (i.e. imposed by an external force/object)
- Describes what the subject is obliged to do by something external.
- Example: I have to cook the chicken to 160°F.

Children must go back to school, but....

Opinion by Erin Bromage

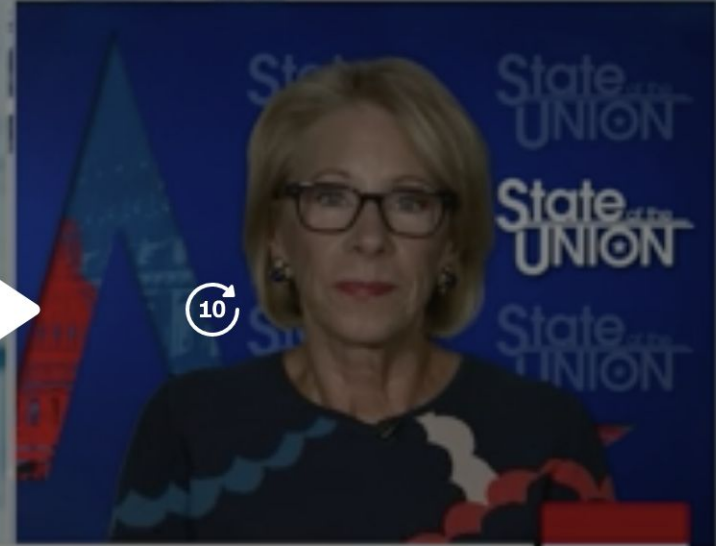
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00:03 / 00:50



Have to or Must?

I _____ stop drinking so much.

She _____ renew her driver's license.

He _____ visit more often.

You _____ pay the fine.

They _____ work harder.

I _____ go to work at 6:45 AM.

“Have to” vs. “Must”

- **Have to** *inflects* for all tenses (i.e. has, had, will have, etc.)
- **Must** does not inflect and can only be used to discuss the present or future.
- I **must** do some yoga now.
- I **must** do some yoga after class today.
- *I must did some yoga before work.
- I **had to** do some yoga before class started.

Tense Review

(Adapted from Englishclub.com)

	subject	auxiliary verb	main verb (have)	to-infinitive	
Past Simple	I	----		to work	yesterday.
Pres. Simple	She	----		to work	today.
Fut. Simple	he			to work	tomorrow.
Present Continuous	We			to wait	now.
Pres. Perfect	They			to change	uniforms.

Negation Contexts

- **Have to:** Negation requires a preceding auxiliary verb:
- Ex. Foreign students **do not** have to take “American” names.
- **Must:** Negation when followed by not (or n’t contraction).
- Ex. Foreign students **must not (or musn’t)** take “American” names.

*“Have to” structure does not lend itself to **prohibiting** an action.*

Prohibitions use “**must**”.

- Passengers must not smoke. * Passengers do not have to smoke.
- I mustn’t forget my anniversary this year.

Final thoughts on **must** and **have to**...

- Negations of these forms cannot be used to express **past tense**, so other grammatical structures must be used:

Teachers **must not** include final exam grades when calculating final averages this year.

Teachers **could not** include final exam grades when calculating final averages last year.

- Conversational/Informal Alternative: have **got to** - “**gotta**”
- **I gotta update my computer.**

Must(ard) vs. *Have to(ard)



References

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