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Essential Modal Verbs Worksheet: Obligation, Advice, and Deduction

Instructions

This worksheet is designed for intermediate English learners. Complete the 25 sentences by choosing the most appropriate modal verb or modal expression from the list below. Pay close attention to the context to determine the correct function (Obligation, Advice, or Deduction) and the correct strength.

Available Modals:

- must
- mustn't
- have to
- don't have to
- should
- shouldn't
- ought to
- had better
- can't
- must have
- can't have

Part A: Obligation and Necessity

Choose the best modal or modal expression to complete the sentence.

1. Students in this class _____ submit their assignments by midnight, or they will lose points. (External rule)
2. I feel sick today. I think I _____ see a doctor immediately. (Strong personal necessity)
3. You _____ worry about buying tickets; I already bought them online. (Lack of necessity)
4. It is a legal requirement that all drivers _____ wear a seatbelt. (Strong external obligation/Law)
5. Employees _____ smoke inside the building; it is strictly prohibited. (Prohibition)
6. Since it's Sunday, you _____ wake up early tomorrow. You can sleep in. (Lack of necessity)
7. She _____ pay her rent on the first of the month, according to the lease agreement. (External obligation)
8. We _____ waste any time if we want to catch the last train. (Personal necessity/urgency)

Part B: Advice and Recommendation

Choose the most appropriate modal for advice, paying attention to the level of warning.

9. My head hurts terribly. I think I _____ take an aspirin. (General advice)
 10. You _____ forget to renew your visa, or you will be deported. (Strong advice with a serious warning)
 11. If you want to improve your fluency, you really _____ practice speaking every day. (Strong recommendation)
 12. It's getting dark, so you _____ walk home alone; take a taxi instead. (Advice against doing something)
 13. If you want a good grade, you really _____ review the contract very carefully before signing. (Formal or morally correct advice)
 14. The weather forecast says it will rain. You _____ remember to bring an umbrella. (Good idea/recommendation)
 15. He keeps making the same mistake. Someone _____ tell him how to do it correctly. (General advice/Suggestion)
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Part C: Deduction and Logical Conclusion (Present & Past)

Choose the modal that expresses the correct level of certainty (deduction).

16. Sarah is an expert programmer. She _____ be able to fix this software issue easily. (Strong logical conclusion/certainty)
17. I just saw the mail carrier deliver a package. It _____ be the book I ordered. (Almost 100% certainty)
18. That expensive car _____ belong to John. He just lost his job and has no money. (Strong conclusion that something is impossible)
19. They started celebrating and cheering loudly. They _____ won the game! (Strong conclusion about a past event)
20. The door is unlocked and the lights are off. They _____ gone home already. (Almost 100% certainty about a past event)
21. My keys aren't in my bag or my pocket. I _____ left them at the restaurant. (Strong conclusion about a past event)
22. She looks completely relaxed and happy. She _____ had a terrible day. (Strong conclusion that something is impossible in the past)
23. He speaks English fluently and without an accent. He _____ lived in the US for a long time. (Strong conclusion about a past state/experience)
24. You look exhausted. You _____ be working too hard recently. (Strong logical conclusion/certainty)
25. It took them an hour to drive five miles. The traffic _____ been terrible. (Strong conclusion about a past event/state)

Answer Key

Part A: Obligation and Necessity

1. have to (External rule/requirement)
2. must (Strong personal necessity)
3. don't have to (Lack of necessity)
4. must or have to (Strong external obligation/Law, *have to* is slightly more common for laws)
5. mustn't (Prohibition)
6. don't have to (Lack of necessity)
7. has to (External obligation, remember *have to* changes form with the subject)
8. must (Personal necessity/urgency)

Part B: Advice and Recommendation

9. should (General advice)
10. had better not (Strong advice with a serious warning)
11. should (Strong recommendation)
12. shouldn't (Advice against doing something)
13. ought to (Formal or morally correct advice)
14. should (Good idea/recommendation)
15. ought to or should (General advice/Suggestion)

Part C: Deduction and Logical Conclusion (Present & Past)

16. must (Strong logical conclusion/certainty)
17. must (Almost 100% certainty)
18. can't (Strong conclusion that something is impossible)
19. must have (Strong conclusion about a past event)
20. must have (Almost 100% certainty about a past event)
21. must have (Strong conclusion about a past event)
22. can't have (Strong conclusion that something is impossible in the past)
23. must have (Strong conclusion about a past state/experience)
24. must (Strong logical conclusion/certainty)
25. must have (Strong conclusion about a past event/state)