



must

[modal verb] (1) to express obligation, necessity, or strong recommendation: *I really must get a new computer.* • *You must try this restaurant: it's fantastic.* • *Let me do the dishes. ~ No, you're ill. You mustn't.*

(2) to make deductions: *That must be Tom's jacket.* • *They're late: they must have got lost.* • *It must be raining: everyone's wet.*

[noun]: something that it is necessary to do or have: *A sunhat is an absolute must on the beach.*

→ had

Note: The contraction of *must + not* is *mustn't*.

1 must | + bare infinitive

I must get a haircut.
You must pay more attention.
The government must act now.

▲ to say what the speaker thinks is necessary

You must see Shrek 2: it's hilarious.
We must eat here again.

▲ to make a strong recommendation

There's the phone. ~ That must be Derek. He always phones around now.
The clock stopped. ~ It must need new batteries.

▲ to make strong deductions about present or future situations

2 must | + have | + past participle

Why wasn't Peter at the meeting? ~ He must have forgotten.
It must have been 1998 when I last saw Jeremy.

▲ to make strong deductions about past situations

3 must | + be | + -ing

The lights are out. The film must be starting.
Look at the birds: they must be migrating.

▲ to make strong deductions about present situations that are in progress

4 must | + n't/not | + verb

You mustn't tell anyone I told you.
The children mustn't play near the road.

▲ to say what is prohibited or what should not happen

Collocations

Must is often made more emphatic with *really*:

You really must get more exercise.
I really must do something about that door.

Must often goes with verbs like *go, rush, dash, fly*:

I'm sorry, it's late. I must dash.
Look at the time. I must be going.

Set phrases

• 'I must say ...'

They've got some nice things in this shop, I must say.
I must say I thought their flat was a bit untidy.

▲ to emphasize what you are saying.

• 'if you must [...]'

I'm just going over to Terry's place. ~ Well, if you must.
If you must smoke, can you smoke on the balcony?

▲ to give permission for something you don't agree with.

• 'if you must know'

How much did you pay the hairdresser? ~ \$50, if you must know.

▲ to indicate that someone is being too curious.

• 'you must be joking'

The flight has been cancelled. ~ You must be joking.

▲ to express disbelief.

Exercises

1 Choose words from the list to complete the sentences:

joking fly
going say
know try

- 1 How old are you? ~ 53, if you must ____.
- 2 You must ____ one of their icecreams.
- 3 It's nearly midnight. We must be _____.
- 4 I must ____ she doesn't look 30.
- 5 Your credit card's been declined. ~ You must be _____.
- 6 I must ____ or I'll be late for my appointment.

2 Match the two parts of these exchanges:

- 1 The computer just crashed.
 - 2 The cat's sick.
 - 3 The grass is wet.
 - 4 No one answered the phone.
 - 5 I haven't seen her for ages.
 - 6 The station's looking nice.
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- a It must have rained.
 - b It must have eaten something.
 - c She must have retired.
 - d They must have painted it.
 - e There must have been a power cut.
 - f They must have gone away.

Answers
1 1. know; 2. try; 3. going; 4. say; 5. joking; 6. fly.
2 1-e; 2-b; 3-a; 4-f; 5-c; 6-d