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## should(should)

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**Pronunciation:** /SHōōd /

*modal verb (3rd sing. **should**)*

**1** used to indicate obligation, duty, or correctness, typically when criticizing someone's actions:

*he should have been careful*

*I think we should trust our people more*

*you shouldn't have gone*

indicating a desirable or expected state:

*by now students should be able to read with a large degree of independence*

used to give or ask advice or suggestions:

*you should go back to bed*

*what should I wear?*

**(I should)** used to give advice:

*I should hold out if I were you*

**2** used to indicate what is probable:

*\$348 million should be enough to buy him out*

*the bus should arrive in a few minutes*

**3** *formal* expressing the conditional mood.

(in the first person) indicating the consequence of an imagined event:

*if I were to obey my first impulse, I should spend my days writing letters*

referring to a possible event or situation:

*if you should change your mind, I'll be at the hotel*

*should anyone arrive late, admission is likely to be refused*

**4** used in a clause with "that" after a main clause describing feelings:

*it is astonishing that we should find violence here*

**5** used in a clause with "that" expressing purpose:

*in order that training should be effective it must be planned systematically*

**6** (in the first person) expressing a polite request or acceptance:

*we should be grateful for your advice*

**7** (in the first person) expressing a conjecture or hope:

*he'll have a sore head, I should imagine*

*"It won't happen again." "I should hope not."*

**8** used to emphasize to a listener how striking an event is or was:

*you should have seen Marge's face*

**(who/what should — but)** emphasizing how surprising an event was:

*I was in this store when who should I see across the street but Toby*

**Origin:**

Old English *sceolde*: past of SHALL

**Usage**

As with **shall** and **will**, there is confusion about when to use **should** and **would**. The traditional rule is that **should** is used with first person pronouns (*I* and *we*), as in *I said I **should** be late*, and **would** is used with second and third persons (*you*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*), as in *you didn't say you **would** be late*. In practice, however, **would** is normally used instead of **should** in reported speech and conditional clauses: *I said I **would** be late*; *if we had known, **we would** have invited her*. In spoken and informal contexts, the issue rarely arises, since the distinction is obscured by the use of the contracted forms **I'd**, **we'd**, etc. In modern English, uses of **should** are dominated by the senses relating to obligation (for which **would** cannot be substituted), as in *you **should** go out more often*, and for related emphatic uses, as in *you **should** have seen her face!*

