

- To talk about permission in the past, we use *could, was allowed to*.  
*In my last job I **could/was allowed to** use the phone for personal calls.*
- To talk about prohibition in the past, we use *couldn't, wasn't allowed to*.  
*In my last job I **couldn't/wasn't allowed to** use the phone for personal calls.*

## D Opinions and advice

- We use *should, should not (shouldn't), ought to* and *ought not to (oughtn't to)* to give an opinion or recommendation about what is the best thing to do.  
*We **should/ought to** invest more heavily in marketing.*  
*By midnight Kennedy had 265 electoral votes, just four short of victory. Nixon wasn't ready to concede, but he thought he **should** make some kind of statement to his supporters in the ballroom downstairs. Kennedy watched this on TV. 'Why **should** he concede?' Kennedy said to his aides. 'I wouldn't.' (Washington Post website)*
- When we use *you* speaking to someone else our opinion becomes advice.  
*You **should** speak to your boss.* (it's my advice to you)  
Note that advice is like a weak type of necessity (section A).  
*You **should/ought to** go to the doctor.* (advice: it's the best thing to do)  
*You **must/have to** go to the doctor.* (strong advice: it's really necessary)
- *had better (not)* is used for strong opinions. *Had* is usually contracted.  
*I'd **better not interrupt** him while he's on the phone.*  
*I think you'd **better call** them straightaway.*

## E Past criticism

When we use the verbs in section D in the past (+ *have* + past participle) we mean that we didn't do the right thing and now we are making a criticism.

*We **should have seen** the dangers a long time ago.*  
*We **shouldn't have spent** all the advertising budget on television spots.*  
*You **ought to have mentioned** that earlier.*

## F Need to

- *Need to* means the same as *have to* (sections A/B).  
*You **have to/need to** sign this form in two places, here and here.*  
*If you're going to jump into the UK market and become an important player, you **need to** have wine that retails in the £6–£7 price range.* (New York Times website)
- Notice the two possible negative forms.  
*You **don't need to/needn't** wait for me – I'll come along later.*
- In strict grammar the two negative forms have different meanings in the past.  
*I **didn't need to arrive** at seven.* (we don't know when I arrived – maybe seven or later)  
*I **needn't have arrived** at seven.* (we know when I arrived – seven – but it wasn't necessary)  
But in everyday speech we often use *didn't need to* for both cases.