We can use *must* and *should* to express obligation in the future:
I really **must get to** *the dentist next week.* *You* **should pay** *the amount due by 25th October.*
If the obligation is external, we use *will have to* or *will need to*:
The children **will have to stay** *at home next week while the school is closed for building work.*
We'll need to get our visas sorted out or we won't be able to stop over in the States.

We use *won't have to, won't need to* or *needn't* when there is no future obligation:
With this food processor, you **won't have to/won't need to/needn't** *peel or chop any more.*

2 Present and future necessity

We can use *need to, must* and *have to* to express a necessity that results from things other than just commands, rules or laws, or to show that something is very important:
All living beings **need to/must/have to take** *in sustenance in order to live.*
I really **need to/must/have to be** *going now. I'm meeting John in half an hour.*
We'll need to set up a more intensive training regime.

If we want to express a necessity without suggesting who should deal with it, we can use *need + -ing* form:
That poor bird – his cage really **needs cleaning**.

This use has a passive meaning and is similar to the passive infinitive (➤ Unit 62.3):
That poor bird – his cage really **needs to be cleaned**.

We use *don't need to/needn't* for absence of necessity felt by the speaker:
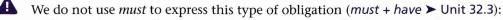*We* **needn't/don't need to put** *the heating on yet; it's not cold enough.*

3 Past obligation and necessity

We use *had to* when we talk about an obligation or necessity in the past:
The staff and students at the university **had to evacuate** *the campus.*
Because of Steve's career we've **had to move** *twice in the last year.*

We use *should/ought to + have +* past participle for an unfulfilled obligation in the past:
You really **should have/ought to have registered** *before the term started.* (But you didn't …)

⚠ We do not use *must* to express this type of obligation (*must + have* ➤ Unit 32.3):
✗ *The record was finally released eighteen months later than it must have been.*
✓ *The record was finally released eighteen months later than it* **should** *have been.*

We use *didn't have to/didn't need to* when there is no obligation in the past:
You **didn't have to/didn't need to finish** *the washing-up. I could have done it.*

Notice these two past forms of *need*; they have different meanings:
We **didn't need to take** *warm sweaters, as the weather was so good.*
(We don't know if the speaker took warm sweaters or not.)
We **needn't have taken** *warm sweaters. We could have used the space in our luggage for more books!* (We know that the speaker took warm sweaters.)

4 Other ways of expressing obligation

We can use *be to* for an order from a person in authority (➤ Unit 27.5):
The members of the jury **are to report** *to the judge's chambers immediately.*

We use *be supposed to* for a lesser obligation and one that is frequently ignored:
We're **supposed to leave** *our textbooks at school, but we often take them home.*

We use *be liable to* for obligation (often in a legal context):
Anyone causing damage **will be liable to pay for** *all necessary repairs.*

FORMALITY CHECK We use *be obliged to* (*be obligated to* in American English) or *be required to* in formal contexts:
We're **obliged to contribute** *twenty-five percent of the costs of the repairs.*
Motorists **are required** *by law* **to wear** *seat belts in the European Union.*