

müssen

— DAS MODALVERB MÜSSEN

müssen is a German modal verb meaning “to have to” or “must”: muss · musst · muss.

The biggest trap: the main verb goes to the end of the sentence as an **infinitive**. And in the negative, **nicht müssen** (no need) gets mixed up with **nicht dürfen** (forbidden).

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01 00:00

Conjugation: ich and er/sie/es look the same

With modal verbs, **ich** and **er/sie/es** take **no ending** and are identical. That holds for **müssen** too.

Watch **du** and **ihr** in the table: **musst** (double s) and **müsst** (umlaut + double s).

PERSON	FORM
ich	muss
du	musst
er / sie / es	muss
wir	müssen
ihr	müsst
sie / Sie	müssen

The **ich** and **er/sie/es** forms stay **muss** — no ending at all.

02 01:10

When do you use it?

müssen expresses **necessity** that comes from an outside rule, an authority or the situation. It is your English “must” or “have to”.

SITUATION	GERMAN SENTENCE	MEANING
Work rule	Ich muss pünktlich sein .	I have to be on time .
Doctor's orders	Du musst Wasser trinken .	You have to drink water .
Law / rule	Man muss an der Ampel halten .	You have to stop at a red light .
Your own plan	Wir müssen heute einkaufen .	We have to go shopping today .

English “have to”, “must” and “need to” all fit into this one table.

03 02:20

Sentence structure: modal second, infinitive last

In a statement the conjugated modal verb is in **second position** and the main verb (the infinitive) is at the **very end**.

In a question the modal verb is in **first position**, the subject second, and the infinitive still stays at the end.

In the negative, **nicht** usually stands right before the infinitive or somewhere in the middle; the infinitive still stays at the end.

SENTENCE TYPE	STRUCTURE	EXAMPLE
Statement	Subject + modal (2nd) + ... + infinitive (last)	Ich muss arbeiten .
Question	Modal (1st) + subject + ... + infinitive (last)	Musst du arbeiten?
Negative	Subject + modal (2nd) + ... + nicht + infinitive (last)	Ich muss nicht arbeiten .

The main verb is **never conjugated**; it always stands at the end of the sentence as an infinitive.

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04 06:00

Traps



TRAP 01

Using “zu”

After a modal verb the infinitive comes without “zu”. It is one of the most common mistakes.

✗ **Ich muss zu arbeiten.**

Never use “zu” after a modal verb.

✓ **Ich muss arbeiten.**

Correct: infinitive at the end, no “zu”.



TRAP 02

Mixing up nicht müssen and nicht dürfen

English already splits “you don’t have to” from “you mustn’t”, but a word-for-word translation of “must not” pulls you straight into the trap: in German the two live in different worlds — one is free, the other is punished.

✗ **Du musst nicht hier rauchen.**

This says “You don’t have to smoke here”, not that it is forbidden.

✓ **Du darfst hier nicht rauchen.**

Correct way to say it is forbidden: “You mustn’t smoke here.”



TRAP 03

Adding -t to er/sie/es

Modal verbs have **no ending** in the 3rd person singular (er/sie/es); it is identical to the ich form.

✗ **Er muss-t arbeiten.**

Regular verbs take -t (er arbeitet) but modal verbs (er muss) do not.

✓ **Er muss arbeiten.**

Correct: ich muss = er muss (no ending).

05 07:00

The other modal verbs

06 07:30

Test yourself

Tap an answer — we will look at why together.

+7

Take the full test

13 questions · timed · rule breakdown at the end



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GENAU — NOT RULES, THE MOMENT IT CLICKS.

