



NOT HAVE TO / NOT NEED TO / NEEDN'T

Grammar: ABSENCE OF OBLIGATION

In order to refer to an absence of obligation, we have 3 options: HAVE TO / NEED TO and NEEDN'T.

1/ NOT HAVE TO / NOT NEED TO

In order to refer to an absence of obligation, we use HAVE TO and NEED TO in their negative form for past and future tenses. We will obviously conjugate these verbs according to the tense of the sentence and/ or context.

There is a slight difference between the 2:

-HAVE TO refers to obligation

-NEED TO refers to the necessity of doing something to reach a goal

However, they are commonly used in the same way and considered interchangeable.

Example:

I didn't have to call= I didn't need to call(= it was not necessary to call so I didn't call)

They won't have to call= they won't need to call (it won't be necessary to call and they know it so they won't)

2/ NEEDN'T

Here, we use the modal NEED which is always in negative form. It can be used for past tenses only if it is followed by the auxiliary HAVE and a past participle (PP) or 3rd column of the irregular verbs.

The pattern is: NEEDN'T HAVE + PP

Example:

She needn't have called = she called but it wasn't necessary

So we can tell the difference of meaning between NOT HAVE TO/ NOT NEED TO and NEEDN'T for past tenses



Dialogue:

HEALTH

- Sarah: I'm feeling sick today. I wanted to attend the class but I feel like I won't be able to. Can I take my leave, please? I have a migraine, a runny nose and my throat is sore.
- Wentworth: The class starts in 20 minutes. Did you catch the flu?
- Sarah: : I'm not sure. I'll need to go and see a doctor. I can't bear the pain and it is really bothersome.
- Wentworth: Does you head ache?
- Sarah: It does. I even have a hard time while I'm eating. I'm sneezing everytime there's a little breeze.
- Wentworth: Are you sure you're not having hay fever?
- Sarah: Hay fever? What's that?
- Wentworth: This is the reaction to the allergy some people have when it comes to pollen. We're in early May. Flowers are blossoming. Springtime may cause you such inconvenience.
- Sarah: When I was younger, I never had that. I didn't need to go to the general practitioner. GPs are expensive and sometimes, they give you too much medication.
- Wentworth: You needn't have come if you felt so bad. You can take your leave. Head to your family doctor. He'll give you a prescription and if you start today, you might be cured by the end of the week. Just stay home, stay warm and take the medicine.
- Sarah: Thanks for your concern.
- Wentworth: Get well.
- Sarah: Thanks. Have a nice day.
- Wentworth: REST! Rest well, Sarah!