

Teacher's notes

**LEVEL:** Pre-intermediate / A2

**TIME:** 50 minutes

**SKILLS:** speaking, reading, writing

**AIM:** to practise office conversation: helping a new colleague to get to know office procedures

**MATERIALS:** one copy of the worksheet per student; one copy of cut-out prompt cards and office procedures template per pair of students

**Grammar and functions**

modals for suggestion and rules:

*should*

*shouldn't*

*have to*

*don't have to*

*must*

*must not*

*you're not allowed to*

**Useful questions from the activities**

*So, what are the working hours?*

*What name do I use with colleagues and bosses?*

*Is there a dress code at the company?*

*Who can help me if I've got a problem?*

**Words from the activities**

*colleagues; employees; co-workers (AmE); should; have to; allow / allowed; suit; dress code; casually; against company rules; against company policy; canteen (BritE); employee cafeteria (AmE); crowded; noon; suggest; advice; wear; smartly (BritE); professional / stylish (AmE); uniforms; grooming; grooming code (AmE); prohibited; overtime; jewellery; flashy; health; sanitary; hazard; body odours*

**Other possible lexis to elicit**

*dress; shirt; tie; necklace; earrings; piercing; tattoos*

**Procedure**

As a warm-up, if the students are already working, ask them about helping new employees in their companies.

*How often do you have new employees?*

*Who shows the new employees around?*

*Do you remember your first day at work? Were the other employees helpful to you?*

If you have pre-experience students, ask them to imagine the kind of help a new employee would like to have.

**A**

1. Get the students to complete Activity A in pairs by matching the questions to the answers and choosing the correct modal for each answer. Check the questions were matched with the correct answers and the correct modals were chosen as a whole class.

**Key 1** (matching questions and answers): 1. b; 2. a; 3. e; 4. c; 5. g; 6. d; 7. h; 8. f

**Key 2** (choosing the correct modal): 1. *should*; 2. *have*; 3. *must*; 4. *mustn't*; 5. *suggest*; 6. *have to*; 7. *should*; 8. *should*; 9. *have*; 10. *should*; 11. *not allowed*; 12. *mustn't*; 13. *not allowed to*

If you would like to use audio at this stage, you could get your students to check their own answers by listening.

2. Ask about their first impression of the language and check their understanding of how the different expressions are used, for example:

Which way of giving advice seems stronger: 'should' or 'have to'?

Does 'must' mean the same as 'should' or 'have to'?

**B**

Explain to students that they will need to find both positive and negative forms of letting someone know about company policy. Write the list on a flipchart or whiteboard. Ask each student to give you examples to fill in the list.

For offering help or advice

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

For telling the colleague about the management or company rules

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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Key:

**For offering help or advice**

*you should; you shouldn't; I think you should; I don't think you should; I suggest*

**For telling the colleague about the management or company rules**

*you can; you have to; you don't have to; you must; you mustn't; you're not allowed to*

C

1. Play the audio asking students to listen only. Then get students to work in pairs role-playing the questions and answers from Activity A.

2. Explain the differences in the modal verbs. Write example sentences on the flipchart or whiteboard.

- We use *should* or *shouldn't* for giving advice or suggestions.  
*You look tired. You should take a break. You shouldn't work so hard!*
- We use *have to* when something is necessary or really important.  
*We have to use our manager's first name. He really doesn't like us to use his family name.*
- We use *don't have to* when we mean something isn't necessary.  
*We've got a sales meeting today, but I don't have to attend as I'm on a training course.*
- *Must* is like *have to*, but it is more common in written instructions or for company rules and can sound formal and a bit old-fashioned when you are speaking.  
*Since I meet customers every day, I must dress smartly.*
- *Mustn't* is to say something isn't allowed or permitted. Often used in company rules and regulations, laws and police policy.  
*We mustn't leave our desk full of papers or files at the end of the day. We've got a clean desk policy here.*

- *You're not allowed to ...* is used in a similar way to *mustn't* for company rules or regulations.  
*You're not allowed to leave computers switched on overnight in the office.*

Teaching tip:

Ask students if they've heard of the expression *clean desk policy*. What's the reason for the policy? Answer: to make sure private data / documents are not left out on the employees' desks after they leave the office. Do they have this policy at their company?

3. Elicit more practice from the students by asking them about these topics.

- In their company – or a company they know – what rules do they suggest for dressing appropriately? (This is often referred to as a *dress code*.)

For example:

*Men should wear: a suit, tie, trousers and jacket in neutral colours.*

*Women shouldn't wear mini-skirts, hot pants or flashy jewellery. They should wear a suit: trousers or a skirt with a jacket / blazer.*

- Ask students if they can give examples of companies where employees wear *uniforms*. Get them to specify which jobs and what kind of uniforms (if your students are already working, encourage them to give examples from their own company).

- What about rules for appearance apart from clothing?

For example, can a waitress or food handler have painted fingernails? (Answer: No, because it's a health / sanitary hazard.)

Explain that, especially in American English, the rules about appearance other than clothes is called a *grooming code* (*grooming* means coming to work with clean hair, nails, no offensive body odours or no heavy perfume). You can develop the discussion with prompt questions, such as:

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*Do companies allow jewellery at work?*

*Which companies don't allow certain jewellery?*

In food handling, rings are prohibited. For assembly and production workers, jewellery isn't allowed. Ask them why that is. (Answer: rings and necklaces could get caught in the machinery.)

**D**

Get students to work in pairs and distribute the cut-out prompt cards. Cards are halved between each pair. Students ask their partners questions based on the prompts on their cards. When they have finished, they swap and their partner asks them their questions.

Monitor students as they are asking and answering and review any questions that come up with the whole class.

**Follow-up**

1. Get the students to make a rules sheet with their own office procedures. Start them off by giving them a copy of the office procedures template. If they are pre-experience students, get them to think of a company they know or invent their own. They then make up rules that are appropriate for the company they have chosen.
2. Get each student to make a small presentation about their company rules. Tell them to prepare their talk using the language of advice or company rules. Have them refer to activities A and B to use the key language.