

PAST CRITICISM & REGRET

B2 | Teens / Adults | Grammar Practice | 35-45 minutes

Learn and practise | Discuss mistakes, unnecessary actions and unused opportunities.

1. READ: After a difficult journey

Read the conversation. Notice the bold grammar and how the speakers use it.

Evan: That journey was exhausting. I **should have booked** a seat.

Rita: You **could have used** my discount code. I sent it last week.

Evan: I know. I **shouldn't have waited** until the last minute.

Rita: Did they check the printed ticket?

Evan: No. I **needn't have printed** it. The one on my phone was fine.

Rita: Next time, let's book together. It'll save us both some trouble.

2. GRAMMAR: Looking back at choices

Should have: better choice; could have: unused option; needn't have: unnecessary action.

Use / form	Pattern	Example
Better choice	should have + participle	I should have booked.
Unused option	could have + participle	You could have used my code.
Unnecessary action	needn't have + participle	I needn't have printed it.

Needn't have: I did it, but it wasn't necessary.

Didn't need to: it wasn't necessary; the phrase alone doesn't say whether I did it.

Criticism can sound harsh. Use these forms carefully when discussing someone else's choices.

A. CHOOSE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. I should have book / booked earlier.
2. You shouldn't have spent / spend so much.
3. We could have take / taken a taxi.
4. I needn't have printed / print it; I did, but it wasn't needed.
5. She should have ask / asked for help.
6. He could have call / called, but he didn't.
7. We shouldn't have wait / waited so long.
8. I bought food unnecessarily. I needn't have bought / buy it.

Read each answer aloud. Explain which meaning or time clue helped you.

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Use it | Complete a context, write sentences and speak with a partner.

B. COMPLETE: Lessons from a journey

Use the given modal with have + past participle.

1. I _____ (should / book) a seat; standing was tiring.
2. I _____ (should / not / wait) until the last minute.
3. I had your code, so I _____ (could / save) some money, but I didn't.
4. I printed the ticket, but I _____ (need not / print) it.
5. We _____ (should / check) the delays before leaving.
6. We had time to take a break, so we _____ (could / stop), but we carried on.

C. CHANGE THE SENTENCES

1-2: Express a better past choice with should have.

Example: I didn't check. It was a mistake. **I should have checked.**

1. I didn't ask. It was a mistake.

2. I rushed. It was a bad idea.

3-4: Express an unnecessary action with needn't have. Example: I printed it unnecessarily. **I needn't have printed it.**

3. I paid, but entry was free.

4. I cooked, but dinner was provided.

D. WRITE ABOUT YOU

Write a better past choice, an unused opportunity and an action that turned out to be unnecessary.

Example: **I should have checked. I could have called Jo. I needn't have bought a new bag.**

E. SPEAK WITH A PARTNER

Discuss a minor problem and what you would do differently next time.

Use **should have** for reflection and **could have** for alternatives, without blaming your partner.

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Answer key | Keep this page separate during student practice.

1. READ: After a difficult journey

Sample target language from the conversation:

Evan: That journey was exhausting. I **should have booked** a seat.

Rita: You **could have used** my discount code. I sent it last week.

Evan: I know. I **shouldn't have waited** until the last minute.

Evan: No. I **needn't have printed** it. The one on my phone was fine.

A. CHOOSE

- | | |
|-----------|------------|
| 1. booked | 2. spent |
| 3. taken | 4. printed |
| 5. asked | 6. called |
| 7. waited | 8. bought |

B. COMPLETE: Lessons from a journey

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| 1. should have booked | 2. shouldn't have waited / should not have waited |
| 3. could have saved | 4. needn't have printed / need not have printed |
| 5. should have checked | 6. could have stopped |

C. CHANGE THE SENTENCES

1. I should have asked.
2. I shouldn't have rushed.
3. I needn't have paid.
4. I needn't have cooked.

D. WRITE ABOUT YOU / E. SPEAK

Personal answers will vary. Check the target grammar.

Sample: I should have booked early. I could have used a discount. I needn't have printed the ticket.

Teacher note: Could have in this lesson means an available but unused opportunity; it can also express deduction elsewhere. Check that needn't have examples imply the action really happened.