

Should have for past regrets and advice speaking with useful self-study learner training tips

Should have for past regrets bluffing game

Choose one of the “I should(n’t) have...” sentences below and read it out, not worrying about if it is really true about you or not. Your partner will ask you three questions to find out more about that experience, then guess if that sentence was true about you or not. If the sentence is not true about you, continue lying when your partner asks you follow-up questions.

Suggested follow up questions

- “Did(n’t) you...?”
- “Were(n’t) you...?”
- “Why...?”
- “When...?”
- “Who...?”
- “What...?”
- “Which...?”
- “Where...?”
- “How...?”
- “How many/ much/ long/ often/ far...?”

Useful phrases for playing the game

- “I think it’s a true story (because...)”
- “I think it’s not true (because...)/ It sounds like a true story, but...”

- I asked questions about something that I shouldn’t have spoken about.
- I made a gesture which I shouldn’t have made.
- I should have checked with my teacher.
- I should have chosen a different English movie.
- I should have entered an easier class.
- I should have gone to a different place to practise my English.
- I should have helped the foreign tourist who I saw in the street last month.
- I should have prepared more for my English presentation.
- I should have studied Chinese instead of English.
- I should have studied English more at school.
- I should have studied more before I took TOEIC last time.
- I should have studied something different.
- I should have thought more carefully before speaking.
- I shouldn’t have bought the English course that I did last year.
- I shouldn’t have given up studying English that way.
- I shouldn’t have listened to my friend’s advice about learning English.
- I shouldn’t have studied so much grammar.
- I shouldn’t have taken that English test.

Ask about anything above which you couldn’t understand, discuss each time if it is true for anyone in the class or not.

Should have past modals grammar presentation

Answer the questions below in pairs or small groups.

What form of the verb comes after “should(n’t) have” in all the sentences above?

Why do you need “have” before that form of the verb (not just “should” + that form of the verb)?

What’s the difference between “should + verb” and “should have + verb”?

What’s the difference between “I should have checked with my teacher” and “I should check with my teacher”?

Do we use “should have + PP” to talk about the past, present or future?

If I say “I should have checked with my teacher”, did I check with my teacher or not? Was what I did a good idea or not? Would doing that thing have been good or not?

Which of these sentences has the most similar meaning to “I should have checked with my teacher”?

- It will be a good idea if I check with my teacher
- I regret checking with my teacher
- I regret not checking with my teacher

What is the difference between these sentences?

- You should watch Australian movies
- You should have watched Australian movies

What is the difference between those sentences and between the regrets sentences above?

Which of those sentences is giving advice about the past (as a kind of criticism)?

Freer should have for regrets speaking

Change groups. Play the same bluffing game, but this time making up your own “I should(n’t) have...” sentences without looking above.

Should have for past advice speaking challenge game

Work in groups of three or four. Read out one of the (real or imaginary) situations below. Your partners will give you past advice. Respond to each piece of advice, then choose the best one when they have no more ideas.

Useful phrases for responding to past advice

“You are absolutely right. I really should have done that.”

“Hmmm, I’m not sure that would have been a good idea.”

“That might have worked, but it would probably have been better to...”

- I had a meeting in Australia but the Aussie accents were too strong for me to understand.
- I studied really hard for my TOEIC test but my score went down.
- I bought an English novel but gave up on the second page.
- I studied English for two weeks in London but all the friends I made were from my country so I hardly ever spoke English outside class.
- I have forgotten all the vocabulary that I studied last month.
- Someone phoned me in English and I had no idea what to say.
- When I gave an English presentation, my audience looked confused and bored.
- I heard that backpacking in Australia is a good way to meet people from many other countries, but I was too shy to talk to the other hotel guests.
- I met a business contact in the elevator again after saying goodbye at the end of the meeting and I didn’t know what to say.
- When I studied in a language school in Brisbane, the Italian and Spanish students were so talkative that I never had a chance to speak.
- My teacher told me that there were lots of basic spelling mistakes in my last homework.
- When I watched an English film last week, after five minutes I just started reading the subtitles in my own language and so didn’t really practise my English.
- When I watched an English movie with no subtitles, I could only understand about 30%.
- I replied to my American boss’s email, but I wasn’t sure if I used the right level of formality or not.
- It took me three hours to write two English emails yesterday.
- I had a job interview in English but I got so nervous that I could hardly say anything and I had no questions for them at the end.

Do the same with other (true or made up) difficult situations in the past, about language learning or other topics.

Discuss your real experiences of job interviews (in English, in your own language and/ or in other languages).