

- **Need**

*She needn't stay = she doesn't need to stay*

*You needn't try to explain = you don't need to try to explain*

**BUT**

*He needs a new pair of shoes (NOT he need a new pair of shoes)*

**Need** can either act as a **modal verb** or as an **ordinary verb**. When it acts as a modal auxiliary verb it is **nearly always used in negative sentences**, as the above examples illustrate, although it is sometimes also used in questions as a modal verb:

*Need you leave straightaway? Can't you stay longer?*

*Need I say more? I would like you to stay.*

When it is used as an **ordinary verb** with **to** before the following infinitive and with an **s** in the third person singular, it appears in **both affirmative and negative sentences and in questions**:

*She's almost dehydrated. She needs a drink.*

*She needs to drink something before she has anything to eat.*

*She doesn't need to stay in bed, but she should have a good rest before she sets off again.*

*Do I need to stay with her? ~ Yes, I think you should*

- **Needn't have and didn't need to**

Both these forms are used to talk about past events, but there is sometimes a difference in use. When we say that someone **needn't have done something**, it means that **they did it, but it was not necessary** (it was a waste of time). **Didn't need to** is also sometimes used in this way:

*You needn't have washed the dishes. (it wasn't necessary, but you did – it was a waste of time)*

*You didn't need to wash the dishes. (it wasn't necessary, not sure whether you did – but probably you did)*

*I didn't need to prepare all that food. They phoned to say they wouldn't be coming. (not sure whether I did – but quite possible)*

*I needn't have prepared all that food. They phoned to say they wouldn't be coming. (I did prepare the food and it was a waste of time)*

*I needn't have gone to the station (I went – waste of time – not necessary)*

*I didn't need to go to the station (it was not necessary and probably I didn't go)*

But we also use **didn't need to**, to say that **something was not necessary** under circumstances where **it was not done**:

*The sun came out so we didn't need to take any rainwear on the trip.*

*We had plenty of petrol in the tank so I didn't need to fill up.*

*We didn't need to wait for long for them. They arrived just after us.*

**When we are talking about general necessity, we normally use *don't need to*:**

*You don't need to pay for medical care in National Health Service hospitals.*

*You don't need to be rich to get into this golf club. You just need a handicap.*

- **Needs doing**

This construction has a passive meaning.

*The ceiling **needs painting** (= the ceiling needs to be painted)*

*My hair **needs cutting** (= my hair needs to be cut)*

- **Needn't and mustn't**

*You needn't tell Bob = You don't need to tell him; he already knows – it's not necessary*

*You mustn't tell Bob = please don't tell him, I don't want him to know*