Need and needn't grammar rules

Need is a regular verb that can be used as a lexical verb or as a modal. It expresses the necessity for something.

Need as a MAIN verb

You can use need as the main verb in a sentence with the following construction: **need to + verb** (to express a necessity, the need to do something) or **need + noun (gerund)** (to say that you need something):

- I need to have a shower.
- She need<u>s</u> to talk to him.

For the negative and interrogative form, we use *do/does* and *don't/doesn't*:

- Do I need to show my passport?
- Does she need my car?
- You don't need to go there.
- He doesn't need my help.

⚠ Don't forget the final **-s** after *he needs, she needs, it needs*.

For the simple past, we add *-ed* to need: we get "*needed*". For the interrogative and negative form, we use *did* and *didn't*:

- He needed some eggs to make a cake.
- He didn't need to take his umbrellas.
- Did he need my computer?

You can use the formula *need + verbe-ing*, similar to *need to be + past participle.*

- The windows need (or *don't need*) cleaning. (= the windows need to be cleaned).

Need as a modal auxiliary

Need can also be used as a modal aid to the present, but only to the negative form and to the first person of the interrogative form (I or we).

⚠ Be careful, however, these phrases are not often used:

In questions to ask about need, necessity:

- Need I take an umbrella ?
- Need we finish the work today?

The negative form *need not* (or *needn't*) + verbal basis (without *to*) expresses the absence of obligation or necessity:

- We need not hurry.
- It's going to rain, you need't take an umbrella.

⚠ As these formulas are rarely used, we use **have to** or **need to** instead:

- Do I <u>have to</u> take an umbrella? = Do I <u>need to</u> take an umbrella?
- Do we <u>have to</u> finish the work today? = Do we <u>need to</u> finish the work today?
- You don't have to take an umbrella = You don't need to take an umbrella
- We don't have to hurry = We don't need to hurry

To talk about actions that have been done but were not necessary: we use *need not* (or *needn't*) + present perfect simple:

- They needn't have waited for us.

NEED USED AS A NAME

Need can also be a name, it means a necessity:

- Water is a need.

DON'T FORGET!

⚠ Do not confuse *needn't*, which expresses the absence of obligation, with *mustn't*, which expresses prohibition:

- You need'nt come (the negation concerns need)
- You mustn't come (the negation concerns come)

⚠ The structure *need + verbal basis + ing* is often used to say that something needs to be repaired or improved:

- Your bike needs repairing.
- His english is bad. He needs practicing.