When and how to use Must and mustn't?

Must is a modal. It exists only in the present tense and always expresses the point of view of the enunciator.

Must allows you to express the obligation (or constraint), a recommendation, but also the probability (or certainty).

1 - Obligation and constraint

You use must to put pressure on yourself or someone else by expressing:

An <u>obligation</u> or <u>constraint</u> with a must:

- You **must** be back before ten.
- He **must** be careful.
- I **must** hurry.

Must may also make a <u>recommendation</u>:

- You **must** visit the Colosseum when you will go to Roma.
- You **must** see this movie !

In the negative form, an interdiction with **must not** (or *mustn't*).

- You **mustn't** show it to anybody.
- She **must not** climb on the table.
- We **mustn't** wear a cap in the classroom.

2 - Probability and certainty

Must also express a high probability or certainty. It is used when you are almost sure of what you are saying:

- She **must** be Japanese.
- He **must** be tired.
- You **must** be John's brother.
- There **must** be some mistake.

In the negative form, to say that something is impossible, we use *can't* (and not *mustn't*):

- He **can't** be Spanish.
- They **can't** be sleeping, it's already noon.

To express the probability/certainty in the interrogative form, we use **can** (not *must)*:

- **Can** it be false?

To express certainty or probability in the past tense, we use *must + have + verb in the past participle*:

- I **must have left** my phone at home.
- Paul **must have seen** this movie before.
- It **must have been** raining last night.
- He **must have missed** the train.
- Someone **must have taken** my umbrella by mistake.

Be careful not to confuse the two possible meanings of *must + have + verb* in the past participle: either **obligation** or **probability**:

- Paul **must have learned** this lesson by monday (obligation)
- Paul **must have learned** this lesson before (probability)

In the future tense, we use '*have to*':

- When you'll be in Paris you **will have to** see the Eiffel tower.

3 - Must or Have to ?

You will find the complete lesson on the difference between *must* and *Have to* in this lesson!