

Episode 020 – Grammar

The modal verb "sollen"

You already know the modal verbs "müssen", "können" and "möchten". Here's another one, "sollen". Like the others, it usually refers to another verb in the sentence, the main verb.

"sollen" (should, ought to) is conjugated without a vowel change and is used predominantly to express demands and recommendations:

Examples:

Sie **sollen** im Bett bleiben. (You should stay in bed.)

Sie **sollen** Ihre Medizin nehmen. (You should take your medicine.)

The difference between "sollen" and "müssen"

"sollen" und "müssen" are used similarly, but there are slight differences in meaning. "müssen" is used to express an objective necessity. It sounds more pressing and demanding. "sollen" is mainly a way to reflect someone else's orders.

Statement

Sie **sollen** zum Doktor gehen.

Sie **müssen** zum Doktor gehen.

Harry **soll** Deutsch lernen.

Harry **muss** Deutsch lernen.

Meaning

The doctor would like to see Harry now and the nurse passes this information on to Harry. Harry is so ill that he must pay a visit to the doctor.

Julia would like Harry to learn German.

It is necessary for Harry to learn German if he wants to cope well in Germany.