



Ought

Ought is different from other modal verbs, as – just like *have to* – it is followed by a **to-infinitive**. For this reason, it is viewed as a semi-modal verb because it is in some ways like a modal verb and in some ways like a main verb. For example, unlike modal verbs, it is followed by *to*, but like modal verbs, it does not change form for person. The negative is formed by adding 'not' after *ought* – **ought not to**. It can be contracted to **oughtn't to**.

Ought expresses ideas such as **duty, necessity** and **moral obligation**. It is not as forceful as **must**, but it is perceived as stronger than **should**, as, more than an opinion or a personal stance, but a moral duty or a necessity.

You **ought to** be honest.

We **ought to help** the homeless.

You **ought to visit** your grandparents once in a while.

Ought followed by the base form (*ought to do*, for instance) points to present and future time. It can point to past time when it is followed by the perfect infinitive (*ought to have done*; that is, *have + past participle*).



You ought to have helped her = It was your duty to help her but you didn't.