

Lesson Plan: Past modal verbs for criticism 2

Level	Advanced (C1–C2)
Time	60–90 minutes
Skills	Grammar, speaking, writing
Focus	Should have, needn't have, could have, might have — evaluating past actions

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- Use *should have* / *shouldn't have* for past criticism and regret
- Use *needn't have* to describe unnecessary past actions
- Use *could have* / *might have* for past alternatives and unrealised possibilities
- Distinguish these structures from third conditional in meaning and register

TARGET LANGUAGE (EXAMPLES)

Should have / shouldn't have

- You *should have* told me earlier. (criticism — you didn't)
- She *shouldn't have* said that. (criticism — she did)
- I *should have* studied harder. (regret)

Needn't have

- You *needn't have* brought wine — there was already plenty. (you did, but it was unnecessary)
- She *needn't have* worried — everything worked out fine.

Could have / might have

- We *could have* taken a taxi. (it was possible, we didn't)
- She *might have* mentioned it earlier. (mild criticism)
- You *could have* at least called. (reproach)

Didn't need to vs. needn't have

- I *didn't need to* bring anything — they told me not to. (I didn't do it)
- I *needn't have* brought anything — there was plenty. (I did bring it)

LESSON PROCEDURE

1. Warm-up (10 min)

Task: Students think of a recent decision they regret — teacher models.

- 'I *should have* gone to bed earlier. I *needn't have* stayed up watching TV.'
- Collect examples: what forms do students already use?

2. Presentation (15 min)

Task: Present each structure with clear situation + example.

- Key distinction: *needn't have* = did the action unnecessarily; *didn't need to* = didn't do the action.

- Could have = alternative that was available but not chosen.

3. Guided practice (10 min)

Task: Respond to situations using the correct past modal.

- 'She prepared a 3-course meal but nobody came.' → 'She needn't have cooked so much.'
- 'He didn't call the doctor and his condition worsened.' → 'He should have called the doctor.'

4. Discussion (20 min)

Task: Famous decisions in history or business: evaluate using past modals.

- 'What should the company have done when the scandal broke?'
- 'Could the government have responded differently to the crisis?'

5. Writing task (10 min)

Task: Evaluate a real or hypothetical decision using at least 4 different past modals.

EXTENSION / HOMEWORK

Choose one:

1. Write a short critical analysis of a historical or news event using past modal criticism.
2. Write a dialogue where two people discuss a past mistake using should have, needn't have, could have.
3. Correct 6 errors in sentences involving past modal verbs.