

Should Have..

Danilo Gomez Barbosa from **Columbia** writes:

Could you please explain the difference between the modal auxiliary verbs **should**, **could** and **would** and how they are used? Thanks for your help.

Asim from **Pakistan** writes:

I still feel some complication in understanding these modals: **would have**, **should have** and **could have**. Please give me some examples to help me understand.

Roger Woodham replies:



should and should have

Should combines with the perfect infinitive to form **should have** + past participle when we want to talk about **past events that did not happen**, but **should have happened**. We are talking about an expectation and referring back to past time. Compare the following:

Before Tom leaves for work, his wife advises him:

- ***You should take** your umbrella. It might rain. ~ No, I'll be all right. I shan't need it.*

But it did rain. When he arrives back home, his wife says:

- *What did I tell you? **You should have taken** your umbrella. Then you wouldn't have got wet.*

Reference to the present and future:

- ***You should try** and smoke less, Henry. Your health isn't very good and it's getting worse.*

Reference to the past:

- ***I should have** given up smoking years ago, Mary. If I had, I wouldn't*

be in such bad shape now.