

Obligations in the Past

An obligation in the past means what a person was supposed to do, but he/she didn't or what a person was not supposed to do, but he/she did.

Affirmative Statements			
Simple Perfect Modals:	Subject	should ought to could might	have + Past Participle + ...
Progressive Perfect Modals:	Subject	should ought to could might	have + been + Present Participle (Verb + -ing) + ...

Examples:

Situation: Tom was driving carelessly and had an accident.

- *He should have driven carefully.*
- *He should have been driving carefully.*
- *He ought to have driven carefully.*
- *He ought to have been driving carefully.*
- *He could have driven carefully.*
- *He could have been driving carefully.*
- *He might have driven carefully.*
- *He might have been driving carefully.*

Point:

We use "should have" or "ought to have" only for obligations in the past.

"Could have" can also be used for abilities and probabilities in the past.

"Might have" can also be used for probabilities in the past.

Colloquial Pronunciation:

colloquial = informal and conversational

- should've
- could've
- might've

The pronunciation 've is the same as the pronunciation of the word "of".

Even some people pronounce them colloquially as "shoulda", "coulda", and "mighta".

Negative Statements

Simple Perfect Modals:	Subject	should not ought not to	have + Past Participle + ...
Progressive Perfect Modals:	Subject	should not ought not to	have + been + Present Participle (Verb + -ing) + ...

Point:

We don't use "could not have" or "might not have" for negative obligations in the past.

Examples:

Tom was driving carelessly and had an accident.

- *He shouldn't have driven carelessly.*
- *He shouldn't have been driving carelessly.*
- *He ought not to have driven carelessly.*
- *He ought not to have been driving carelessly.*

Yes/No Questions

Simple Perfect Modals:	Should	Subject	have + Past Participle + ...?
Progressive Perfect Modals:	Should	Subject	have + been + Present Participle (Verb + -ing) + ...?

WH Questions

Simple Perfect Modals:	WH Word	should	Subject	have + Past Participle + ...?
Progressive Perfect Modals:	WH Word	should	Subject	have + been + Present Participle (Verb + -ing) + ...?

Point:

In both yes/no questions and WH questions, we use only "should have" and we can't use other perfect modals.

Examples:

- *Should Tom have driven carefully?*
- *Should Tom have been driving carefully?*
- *How should Tom have driven?*
- *How should Tom have been driving?*
- *Who should have driven carefully?*
- *Who should have been driving carefully?*
- *What should Tom have done?*
- *What should Tom have been doing?*
- *What shouldn't Tom have done?*
- *What shouldn't Tom have been doing?*

Short Answers		
Yes,	I you he she it we they	should have.
No,	I you he she it we they	shouldn't have.

Point:

We use only "should have" in short answers when we are talking about an obligation in the past.

Examples:

Should Tom have driven carefully?

- *Yes, he should have.*

Should Tom have driven carelessly?

- *No, he shouldn't have.*

What is the difference between "should have" and "had to" regarding obligations in the past?

The difference between "should have" and "had to" regarding past obligations lies in the type of obligation and the speaker's perspective on it:

Should have:

This implies a recommendation or expectation that wasn't met. It's often used to express regret, criticism, or an ideal scenario that didn't happen. For example, "You should have studied for the exam," suggests that studying was the advisable action, but it didn't happen.

Had to:

This indicates a necessity or compulsion that actually occurred in the past. It's used to describe actions that were required due to circumstances or rules. For example, "I had to study for the exam," implies that studying was necessary and it did happen.

So, "should have" reflects a missed or ideal obligation, while "had to" reflects a fulfilled necessity.

Source:

[High Intermediate 1 \(anglophone.ir\)](http://High Intermediate 1 (anglophone.ir))