

Uses of Should

Indirect speech

Should is the past tense of shall in indirect speech.

The officer said, 'The scoundrel shall be given a good beating.'

The officer said that the scoundrel should be given a good beating.

Duty and obligation

Should can be used with pronouns of all the three persons to talk about duty and obligation.

We should help the poor and the needy.

We should not lie.

We should all work for the common good.

You should pay the fees in time.

Conditional clauses

Should can be used in conditional clauses expressing possibilities, suppositions etc.

If she should come, ask her to wait.

Should it rain, we will cancel the trip.

Should is often used in main clauses which are preceded or followed by a clause expressing unreal conditions.

If I were you, I should accept this offer.

No Sam, I shouldn't do that, If I were you.

Note that this kind of sentence is often used to give polite advice or gentle admonition.

Possibility

Should is often used to express possibility or likelihood.

I should be able to finish this work in time.

Uses of Should

You should be able to beat him.

After lest

Should is the only auxiliary verb that can be used after lest.

Watch and pray lest you should fall into temptation.

Should and shall

Should expresses less possibility than shall.

I shall be able to meet Peter.

I should be able to meet Peter.

Here the first sentence expresses a greater possibility of the event – meeting Peter – taking place.