

English Expressions – “had better”

Giving advice

When your friend is about to do something dangerous or make a mistake, we can give him/her advice. For example:

- Don't do it!
- You shouldn't
- I advise you not to
- I recommend that you don't

There is a common English phrase which we can use to give strong advice: “**had better**”. It's stronger and more urgent than “should”. The structure is:

subject + had better + base verb

Examples:

- You **had better** study for the test. (= You **should** study for the test.)
- You **had better** take an umbrella. (= You **should** take an umbrella.)
- She **had better** call her mother. (= She **should** call her mother.)
- I **had better** stop smoking.
- We **had better** leave now.
- He **had better** not be late.
- It **had better** not be true.
- You **had better** not argue with your teacher.

The idea is that something bad might happen if the advice isn't followed. For example:

You had better take an umbrella. Means: *If you don't take an umbrella, it might rain.*

We had better leave now. Means: *If we don't leave now, we might miss the flight.*

It's common to make a contraction. For example:

- **You'd** better take an umbrella.
- **We'd** better leave now.
- **She'd** better call her mother.
- **He'd** better not be late.
- **I'd** better stop smoking.
- **It'd** better not be true.

Exercise 1. Match the phrases.

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|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1) It's cold outside. | a) You'd better go to the doctor. |
| 2) You're sick. | b) You'd better apologize. |
| 3) The appointment is at 10am. | c) He'd better not be lying. |
| 4) You look very tired. | d) You'd better wear a coat. |
| 5) He says that he passed his test | e) You'd better go to bed early. |
| 6) You were rude to your teacher. | f) We'd better not be late. |

Exercise 2. Complete the following using "had better" and a verb phrase.

1. It's getting dark. We _____.
2. You have a driving test tomorrow. You _____.
3. There's a lot of traffic today. We _____.
4. There are 500km until the next gas station. We _____.
5. There is a storm coming. We _____.
6. Tom is drunk. He _____ . (use 'not')
7. The baby is crying. You _____.
8. I have a job interview tomorrow at 8am. I _____.
9. We're going on a picnic tomorrow. It _____.
10. Susan has very bad toothache. She _____.