

Had better It's time ...

A

Had better (I'd better / you'd better etc.)

I'd better do something = it is advisable to do it. If I don't do it, there will be a problem or a danger:

- I have to meet Amy in ten minutes. **I'd better go** now or I'll be late.
- 'Shall I take an umbrella?' 'Yes, **you'd better**. It might rain.'
- We'd better stop** for petrol soon. The tank is almost empty.

The negative is **I'd better not** (= I had better not):

- 'The jacket looks good on you. Are you going to buy it?' '**I'd better not**. It's too expensive.'
- You don't look very well. **You'd better not go** out tonight.

Remember that:

The form is '**had** better' (usually 'I'd better / you'd better' etc. in spoken English).

- I'd better phone Chris, **hadn't** I?

Had is normally past, but the meaning of **had better** is present or future, *not* past.

- I'd better go to the bank **now** / **tomorrow**.

We say 'I'd better do' (*not* to do):

- It might rain. We'd better **take** an umbrella. (*not* We'd better to take)

B

Had better and should

Had better is similar to **should**, but not exactly the same. We use **had better** only for a specific situation, not for things in general. You can use **should** in all types of situations to give an opinion or give advice:

- It's late. You'd better go. / You **should** go. (a specific situation)
- You're always at home. You **should** go out more often. (in general – *not* 'had better go')

Also, with **had better**, there is always a danger or a problem if you don't follow the advice.**Should** means only 'it is a good thing to do'. Compare:

- It's a great film. You **should** go and see it. (but no problem if you don't)
- The film starts at 8.30. You'd better go now or you'll be late.

C

It's time ...

You can say **It's time** (for somebody) **to** ... :

- It's time **to go** home. / It's time for us **to go** home.

But you can also say:

- It's late. It's time **we went** home.

When we use **it's time** + past (we **went** / I **did** / they **were** etc.), the meaning is present, *not* past:

- It's time** they **were** here. Why are they so late? (*not* It's time they are here)

It's time somebody **did** something = they should have already done it or started it. We often use this structure to criticise or to complain:

- This situation can't continue. **It's time** you **did** something about it.
- He's very selfish. **It's time** he **realised** that he isn't the most important person in the world.

You can also say **It's about time** This makes the criticism stronger:

- Jack is a great talker. But **it's about time** he **did** something instead of just talking.

Exercises

35.1 Read the situations and write sentences with **had better** or **had better not**. Use the words in brackets.

- You're going out for a walk with Tom. It looks as if it might rain. You say to Tom:
(an umbrella) *We'd better take an umbrella.*
- Oliver has just cut himself. It's a bad cut. You say to him:
(a plaster) _____
- You and Kate plan to go to a restaurant this evening. It's a popular restaurant. You say to Kate:
(reserve) We _____
- Rebecca doesn't look very well this morning – not well enough to go to work. You say to her:
(work) _____
- You received your phone bill four weeks ago, but you haven't paid it yet. If you don't pay soon, you could be in trouble. You say to yourself:
(pay) _____
- You want to ask your boss something, but he's very busy and you know he doesn't like to be disturbed. You say to a colleague:
(disturb) I _____

35.2 Put in **had better** where suitable. If **had better** is not suitable, use **should**.

- I have an appointment in ten minutes. I *'d better* go now or I'll be late.
- It's a great film. You *should* go and see it. You'll really like it.
- You _____ set your alarm. You'll never wake up on time if you don't.
- When people are driving, they _____ keep their eyes on the road.
- I'm glad you came to see us. You _____ come more often.
- She'll be upset if we don't invite her to the party, so we _____ invite her.
- These biscuits are delicious. You _____ try one.
- I think everybody _____ learn a foreign language.

35.3 Complete the sentences. Sometimes you need only one word, sometimes two.

- I have a toothache. I'd better *go* to the dentist.
 - John is expecting you to phone him. You _____ better phone him now.
 - 'Shall I leave the window open?' 'No, you'd better _____ it.'
 - We'd better leave as soon as possible, _____ we?
- It's time the government _____ something about the problem.
 - It's time something _____ about the problem.
 - I think it's about time you _____ about other people instead of only thinking about yourself.

35.4 Read the situations and write sentences with **It's time** (somebody did something).

- You think the oil in the car needs to be changed. It hasn't been changed for a long time.
It's time we changed the oil in the car.
- You haven't had a holiday for a very long time. You need one now.
It's time I _____
- You're sitting on a train waiting for it to leave the station. It's already five minutes late.

- You enjoy having parties. You haven't had one for a long time.

- The company you work for has been badly managed for a long time. You think some changes should be made.

- Andrew has been doing the same job for the last ten years. He should try something else.
