



The Advice Clinic: Case Files

Reading Passage

Welcome to the subterranean headquarters of the Advice Clinic, an anonymous student-led initiative operating just beneath the bustling corridors of Westbridge Academy. Here, an elite team of peer counsellors intercepts the distress signals of their fellow classmates and formulates actionable solutions to their daily struggles.

Case File #002, currently illuminated on the clinic's main monitor, concerns a fourteen-year-old student named Lucas. According to the diagnostic report, Lucas is a chronic procrastinator and an avid gamer. His nocturnal habits are entirely detrimental to his academic performance; he frequently remains awake past midnight, mesmerised by the flashing pixels of his console. Consequently, he has developed a reputation for succumbing to exhaustion during mathematics lessons. Tomorrow, he faces a formidable English examination, yet his revision materials remain untouched. The clinic's diagnosis is unambiguous: he should immediately power down his devices and prioritise his studies. He certainly shouldn't depend on last-minute cramming, as sleep deprivation severely impairs cognitive function.

Meanwhile, Case File #003 involves Emma, who presents a distinctly modern dilemma. She squanders approximately five hours daily scrolling through ephemeral social media feeds, leaving her consistently behind on her assignments. The clinic advisors deliberated extensively over her predicament. "She shouldn't permit a glowing screen to dictate her future," noted one junior advisor. "She should initiate a digital detox, at least until her homework is concluded."

The linguistic framework utilised by the clinic is both precise and unyielding. When dispensing guidance, the advisors invariably employ the modal verbs 'should' and 'shouldn't', followed strictly by the base form of the verb. This structure delivers recommendations with authority but without aggressive coercion. Whether a peer wishes to enhance their spoken English or merely stay awake through morning registration, the Advice Clinic remains vigilant, ever prepared to dispense vital counsel.

Part 1: Information Retrieval

1. According to the text, what grammatical rule do the clinic advisors follow when giving advice with 'should' and 'shouldn't'?

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2. What specific event is Lucas facing tomorrow that requires him to study?

3. How much time does Emma spend on social media each day?

Part 2: Inference and Language

4. Find and write down a phrase of exactly six words from the second paragraph that shows Lucas's late-night activities are harmful to his schoolwork.

5. Read this sentence from the passage: "She squanders approximately five hours daily scrolling through ephemeral social media feeds..." Based on the context, what does the word **squanders** most likely mean?

- ☐ A) Saves carefully ☐ B) Wastes foolishly ☐ C) Creates quickly ☐ D) Studies intensely

6. The text states that the clinic's advice structure works "without aggressive coercion". Why might the word 'should' feel less aggressive to a student than a word like 'must'?

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Part 3: Evaluate and Respond

7. The clinic advises Emma to "initiate a digital detox" (turning off her devices) while she does her homework. Do you think this is the most effective advice for her? Use evidence from the text to support your opinion.

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8. Imagine you are a senior advisor at the clinic. A student submits a new file: *"I want to improve my spoken English, but I never practise outside the classroom because I am too embarrassed."* Write two sentences of advice for them, using 'should' in one sentence and 'shouldn't' in the other.

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Answers

1. They strictly follow 'should' or 'shouldn't' with the base form of the verb.
2. A formidable English examination.
3. Approximately five hours.
4. "entirely detrimental to his academic performance"
5. B) Wastes foolishly
6. 'Should' suggests a good idea or a strong recommendation rather than an absolute demand or order, giving the student a choice in the matter.
7. *Student answers will vary but must include text reference.* Example: Yes, I think it is effective because the text states she "squanders approximately five hours daily" on social media. If she removes the "glowing screen" entirely, she won't be distracted and can actually finish her assignments.
8. *Student answers will vary but must use should/shouldn't + base verb.* Example: You should practise speaking English with a close friend first so you feel more comfortable. You shouldn't worry about making mistakes because it is part of learning.