Episode 048 – Grammar

Expressing recommendations with "sollen"

Modal verbs usually modify another verb in the sentence - the main verb. They provide more information about the nature of the subject's relation to the action expressed by the main verb.

"sollen" (should or ought to) denotes a challenge or strong recommendation for someone to do something or conveys someone else's instructions.

Examples:
Sie sollen im Bett bleiben.
Sie sollen Ihre Medizin nehmen.

However, "sollen" can also be used to give advice by using it in the subjunctive II.

Examples:
Christian: Du solltest dich mehr bewegen, Harry.
(= Christian thinks it would be good for Harry to get in better shape. He advises Harry to get more exercise.)

Anna: In Berlin solltest du dir den Reichstag ansehen.
(= Anna gives Harry her recommendation to go see the Reichstag when he's in Berlin.)
Here are the most important subjunctive II forms of "sollen":

du:  *Du solltest deine Kondition verbessern.*

ihr: *Ihr solltet in die Sauna gehen.*

Sie:  *Sie sollten mehr Sport treiben.*