

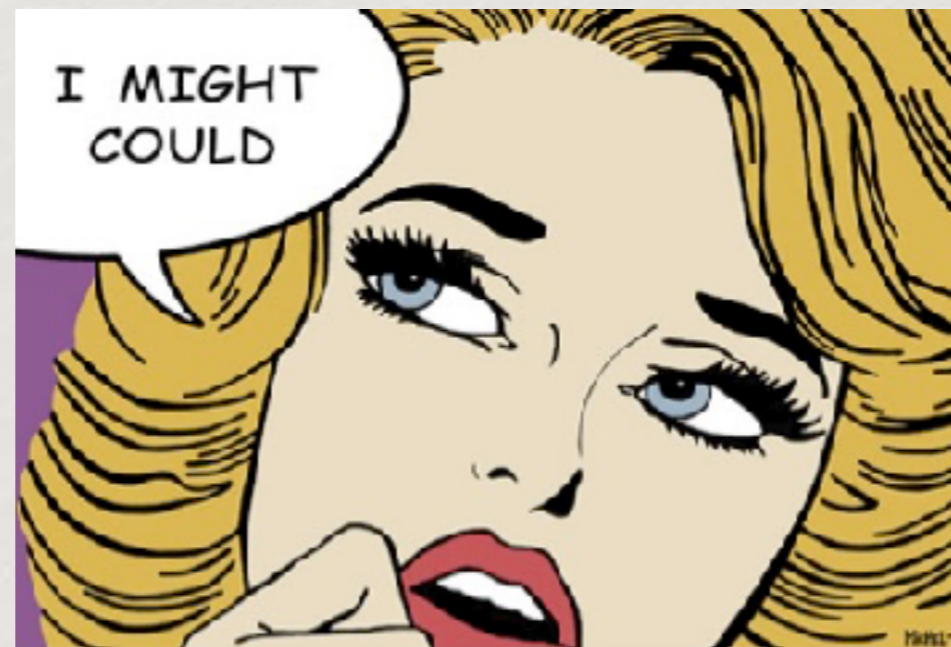
MODAL VERBS

A decorative horizontal flourish consisting of a central diamond shape with symmetrical, tapering lines extending outwards.

MODAL VERBS

Definition

Modal verbs are a group of verbs which share **common grammatical characteristics** and which give a **special meaning** (modality) to the verbs they are with



MODAL VERBS

Common grammatical characteristics:

- Used with the base form of the verbs
- Do not change form (~~-s, -ing, -ed~~)
- Use **not** or **n't** (EXC: may) to make modal verbs negative
- Don't use double modals
 - Modals lack past tenses (EXC: Could / would / might / should)

ATTENTION! Common mistakes

- Never write “to” between the modal and the base form of the verb.
- Never write 2 modal verbs together
- Never add any mark to the modal verb or the verb in the base form

MODAL VERBS

CAN
COULD
MAY
MIGHT
MUST

SHOULD
SHALL
WILL
WOULD

MODAL VERBS

CAN - CAN'T - CANNOT

Present abilities

I **can** ride a bike

Opportunity

It **can** rain this afternoon

Permission

Can I go...?

Possibility (70%)

Anyone **can** learn to ride a bike, if...

Request (informal)

Can I open the window?

Semi- MODALS

BE ABLE TO

CAN (=Ability) exists only in the present tense. The missing tenses can be made up using **BE ABLE TO:**

- I can't do it now, but maybe I'll be able to do it on Sunday.
- He was able to / managed to mend the car.

OTHERS

BE ALLOWED TO

CAN (= Permission) exists only in the present tense. The missing tenses can be made up using **BE ALLOWED TO**:

- She wasn't allowed to see him again.
- I hope that I'll be allowed to drive.

MODAL VERBS

COULD - COULDN'T

Past ability

I **could** ride a bike

Present / future
Possibility

It **could** rain
tomorrow

Permission (polite)

Could you tell me the
way... ?

MODAL VERBS

MAY - MAY NOT

Give permission

You **may** stay up late this evening, children

Formal requests

May I ask you a question?

Possibility (70%)
in the future

It **may** snow next weekend

Express wishes

May the Force be with you!

MODAL VERBS

MIGHT - MIGHT NOT

Possibility (40%)

It **might** snow
tomorrow

Conditional

She **might** pass .. if

Permission (less
direct, more
formal)

Might I make a
suggestion?

MODAL VERBS

MUST

Obligation

I **must** tidy my room

Deduction (100% sure)

Look at that snow. It **must** be really cold outside.

Strong recommendation

You **must** see the new film. It's fantastic!

MODAL VERBS

HAVE TO

Obligation

I **have to** pay taxes

HAVE TO

MUST exists only in the present tense. The missing tenses can be made up using **HAVE TO**:

- I will have to pay the taxes in May

MODAL VERBS

HAVE TO

Obligation

I **have to** pay taxes

MUST vs. HAVE TO

- I really **must** start going to bed earlier (= personal choice)
- I **have to** go to bed early tonight, as I'm catching the train at 6 a.m. (= external necessity)
- She says I've **to** go to bed early tonight. (=external authority)

MODAL VERBS

MUSTN'T - MUST NOT

Prohibition

I **mustn't** use your
smartphone while
you are driving

MODAL VERBS

DON'T/DOESN'T HAVE TO

Absence of
obligation

You **don't have to**
wear a tie at school

MODAL VERBS

SHALL (only UK)

Suggestion

Shall I get a pizza for dinner tonight?

Offers / volunteering

That bag looks heavy.
Shall I carry it for you?

Promises

You shall be the first person to know

Confirmation

I shall meet you there at 7.

MODAL VERBS

SHOULD- OUGHT TO

Give advices

You **should** go to the dentist

Situation likely in the present

Mary **should** be at home now. Give her a call.

Predicition

They **should** win tonight, they're a good team.

MODAL VERBS

WILL - WON'T

Spontaneous
decisions

I **will** call a taxi for
you

General
predictions

I think it **will** rain
tomorrow

Promises

I **will** do my best to help
you

MODAL VERBS

WOULD - WOULDN'T

Polite invitations
or offers

Would you like to
go to the movies?

Hypothetical
situations

Nobody would believe
me if I told them

Future in the past

She promised she would
send a postcard from Peru

SUMMARY



MODAL VERBS

ABILITY

Can (Present ability)

Could (Past ability)

Be able to (Other tenses)

MODAL VERBS

PERMISSION

Can

Could (Less direct, more polite)

May (More formal, less common)

Might (Less direct, more formal style)

MODAL VERBS

PROBABILITY- DEDUCTION

Could (Less sure than might)

Might (Less sure than may)

May (Perhaps it will happen)

Should / ought to (Sth. is probable)

Can't (Sth. is impossible)

Must (We are sure about sth.)

MODAL VERBS

ADVICES

Should / ought to (general)

Must / Had better (Strong recommendation)

Shall (Ask for advice / opinion)

MODAL VERBS

REQUESTS

Can (Ask for things) “Can I have a glass of water, please?”

Could (Less direct, more polite)
“Could I have the bill, please?”

May (More formal) “May I have some more coffee?”

Might (More polite than may) “I wonder if I might use your phone, please?”

MODAL VERBS

REQUESTS 2

Will (Ask for things)

“Will you switch on the light, please?”

Would (Less definite, more polite than will)

“The phone is ringing. Would you answer it?”

MODAL VERBS

OFFERS

Will (to say that we are willing to do sth.) “I’ll help you”

Shall (To offer to do sth.)

Can (=ability, = permission. “Do you want me to...?”)

Could (Less direct, more polite)

MODAL VERBS

OFFERS 2

Would like / would prefer / would rather (To make polite offers and invitations)

- “Would you like me to help you?”
- “Would you prefer to stay in?”
- “Would you rather go now?”

MODAL VERBS

SUGGESTIONS

Can (To suggest possible actions)

“We can watch TV if you like”

Could (less direct, more polite)

“We could go to the cinema tomorrow”

Shall (Ask for and make suggestions) “Where shall we go?”

MODAL VERBS

POSSIBILITY

Can (Theoretical possibility)

“Anyone can learn to swim” (=It’s possible for anyone to learn to swim)

Could (Theoretical possibility in the past)

“My brother could be really horrible as a child”

MODAL VERBS

OBLIGATION

Must (authority comes from the speaker)

“You must be home by 10 p.m.”

Have to (The authority comes from outside the speaker)

“You have to drive on the left in Britain”

MODAL VERBS

PROHIBITION

Mustn't (There is an obligation not to do sth)

“You mustn't smoke here”

MODAL VERBS

LACK OF NECESSITY

Don't have to / don't need to /
needn't / haven't got to* (It is not
necessary to do sth.)

“I don't have to / don't need to /
needn't / haven't got to get up early.
I'm on holiday.”