

Modals 1: present and future

Modal verbs: form and meaning

- Modal verbs are auxiliary verbs – they are used with other main verbs. Modal verbs are *can, could, will, would, may, might, shall, should* and *must*.
- Note these important rules:
 - two modal verbs cannot be put together (NOT *He can will meet you tomorrow.*)
 - modal verbs are followed by the infinitive without *to* (NOT *He must to meet you tomorrow.*)
 - modal verbs do not have third person *s* (NOT *He cans meet you tomorrow.*)
 - modal verbs do not form tenses with *-ing, -ed* etc. (NOT *I'm sorry I canned not meet you yesterday.*)
 - modal verbs use inversion in questions (like the verb *be*), not *do/does*. (NOT *Do can you meet me tomorrow?*)
- Questions are made by putting the modal in front of the subject. Negatives are made by putting *not* immediately after the modal (often shortened to *-n't* in spoken and informal written English).

<i>Can I ...?</i>	<i>I cannot (can't)</i>
<i>Could I ...?</i>	<i>I could not (couldn't)</i>
<i>Will I ...?</i>	<i>I will not (won't)</i>
<i>Would I ...?</i>	<i>I would not (wouldn't)</i>
<i>May I ...?</i>	<i>I may not</i>
<i>Might I ...?</i>	<i>I might not</i>
<i>Shall I ...?</i>	<i>I shall not (shan't)</i>
<i>Should I ...?</i>	<i>I should not (shouldn't)</i>
<i>Must I ...?</i>	<i>I must not (mustn't)</i>

- Modal verbs show the speaker's attitude or feelings about a situation, e.g. how probable or necessary it is, and are also used in offering and requesting. The same modal verb can be used in different ways with different meanings, depending on the situation.

Ability

- We use *can* and *can't* for ability (or *cannot* in formal writing).
I can swim. Can you swim?
- Pronunciation: *can* is normally unstressed /kən/, but is stressed for emphasis /kæn/.
A: Can you speak Chinese?
B: No, but I can speak Japanese.

- We sometimes use *be able to* instead of *can*. *Be able to* forms tenses.
Will you be able to help me move my furniture tomorrow?
- We also use *can* and *can't* for permission: to describe what is allowed or not allowed.
Can I leave early, please?
I can't come skating tomorrow.

Certainty and uncertainty

- Study this table of probability and the notes below:

100%	certainty	<i>will</i>
95%–100%	deduction	<i>must, can't</i>
80%	expectation	<i>should</i>
30%–70%	uncertainty	<i>may, might, could</i>
0%	certainty	<i>won't</i>
- We use *will* and *won't* when we are certain about something in the future.
- We use *must* and *can't* for 'deduction'. This is when we know something is certain because it is logical, or when we make an assumption because of the facts of the situation.
He must be stuck in the traffic.
(I'm sure he is – it's the only possibility.)
She can't be in Italy! I saw her today!
(I'm sure she isn't – it's impossible.)
- We use *should* when we expect that something will happen.
They should arrive here at about 6.30.
- We use *may, might* and *could* when we are uncertain.

<i>I may not have time to finish tonight.</i>	(I don't know)
<i>President Jones might win the next election.</i>	(it's possible)
<i>I may/might have some news for you next week.</i>	(perhaps I will)
<i>He could be stuck in the traffic.</i>	(perhaps he is)

Obligation

- We use *must* or *have to* to explain that something is necessary.
I must finish my homework before 8.00.
I have to phone Jan at 9.00.
- *Have to* is not a modal verb, and has all the forms of *have*.
Ann has to leave now. Why does she have to go? You don't have to do it.

INTERMEDIATE LANGUAGE PRACTICE

- There are differences between *must* and *have to* in some situations. In formal speech and writing we can use either *must* or *have to*.

We use *have to* when the situation makes something necessary, for example because of official rules.

*At our school, we **have to wear** a uniform.*

*Every player in a football team **has to have** a number.*

*When the traffic lights are red, you **have to stop**.*

In everyday speech, we can use *have got to* instead of *have to*.

We use *must* when the speaker personally feels that something is important.

*You really **must stop** working so hard and try to relax.*

*You **must be here** by 8.00, or the bus will leave without you.*

Note that we do not use *to* after *must*.

- In their negative forms *mustn't* and *don't have to* have different meanings.

We use *mustn't* when an action is prohibited/forbidden.

*You **mustn't cross** the road when the red light is showing.*

We use *don't have to* when the action is not necessary – you have a choice.

*You **don't have to turn on** the central heating. It's automatic.*

Opinions and advice

- We use *should* and *shouldn't* to give an opinion about what is the best thing to do. When we speak to another person our opinion becomes advice.

*I think the police **should arrest** hooligans. (opinion)*

*I think you **should talk** to your teacher about it. (advice)*

Note the other use of *should* for expectation.

- We can use *ought to* and *ought not to* to mean the same as *should* and *shouldn't*. *Ought to* is not as common as *should* and is a little more formal, especially in questions and negatives.

*I think she **ought to talk** to her teacher about it.*

Ought to has no third person 's', and forms questions and negatives without *do/does*.

*You **ought not to go**. Ought we to tell the director?*

- With *think* in the negative, we use *I don't think + should* rather than the negative forms of *should* and *ought to*.

*I **don't think you should/ought to go**.*

- *Had better* is used for strong opinions. *Had* is usually a short form.

*I think you'd **better talk** to your teacher about it.*

*We'd **better not forget** to turn off the computer!*

1 Underline the correct word or phrase in each sentence.

- 1 Look at those clouds. I think it can/might/must rain.
- 2 This is impossible! It can't be/mustn't be/may not be the answer.
- 3 Well done! You may be/must be/might be very pleased!
- 4 I've no idea where Jane is. She could be/must be anywhere!
- 5 I suppose it's possible. I might/can/must come to your party.
- 6 I'm not sure. I must not/may not be able to get there in time.
- 7 That can't be/mustn't be/may not be David. He hasn't got a bike.
- 8 Lisa isn't here yet. She can be/must be on her way.
- 9 There's someone at the door. It can be/could be the postman.
- 10 Sorry, I can't come/may not come out tonight. I have to do my homework.

2 Rewrite each sentence using *can*, *can't*, *might* or *must*, and beginning and ending as shown.

- 1 Sarah is really good at swimming.
Sarah can swim really well.
- 2 It's possible that our team will win.
Our team may/might win.
- 3 I'm sure this isn't the right road.
This can't be the right road.
- 4 I'm sure you work very hard!
You must work very hard!
- 5 Caroline isn't allowed to come to our party.
Caroline can't come to our party.
- 6 It's possible that I'll see you tomorrow, but I'm not sure.
I might see you tomorrow , but I'm not sure.
- 7 I'm afraid that your teacher is unable to come today.
I'm afraid that your teacher can't come today.
- 8 I'm sure it's very hot here in summer.
It must be very hot here in summer.
- 9 Excuse me, is it all right if I open the window?
Excuse me, can I open the window?
- 10 I suppose you're Mrs Perry. How do you do?
You must be Mrs Perry. How do you do?

Modals 2: past

Ability

- Use *could*, *couldn't* and *was able to*, *wasn't able to* for general past ability.
Jane could swim/was able to swim when she was ten.
Michael couldn't/wasn't able to ride a horse when he was younger.
- Use *was able to* for one specific past action
When David fell in the river, Jane was able to rescue him.

Certainty and uncertainty

Use *must/can't/might/may/could* + *have* + past participle for deductions or uncertainty about the past. See Grammar 17.

You must have left your passport on the plane.

(deduction: I'm sure you did)

Lina can't have written this.

(deduction: I'm sure she didn't)

Maria might/may/could have taken the bus.

(uncertainty: perhaps she did)

Obligation

- Use *had to*, *didn't have to*, *didn't need to*, *needn't have done* for obligation in the past. There is no past form of *must*.
When I was at school, we had to/didn't have to wear a uniform.
- There is sometimes a difference between *didn't need to* and *needn't have done*.
I didn't need to do any homework yesterday. (no homework was given)
I needn't have done any homework yesterday. (I did it, but it wasn't necessary)

Opinions and advice

- Use *should* + *have* + past participle for opinions about the past. See Grammar 17.
- These forms mean that we are making a criticism, saying 'I think that was wrong'.
I think you should have worked harder. (you didn't - I think that was wrong)
You shouldn't have eaten so much! (you did - I think that was wrong)
 We can use *ought to have done* and *ought not to have done* in the same way.

1 For each question, complete the second sentence so that it means the same as the first, using no more than three words. Contractions count as one word.

- 1 I'm sure you dropped your wallet at the bus stop.
You ~~must have dropped~~ your wallet at the bus stop.
- 2 Maybe Joanna missed the last bus.
Joanna the last bus.
- 3 Peter knew how to skate when he was twelve.
Peter skate when he was 12.
- 4 Emma was wrong not to tell you the answer.
Emma you the answer.
- 5 It wasn't necessary for us to pay to get in.
We pay to get in.
- 6 I'm sure that Diana didn't take your books.
Diana your books.
- 7 Perhaps David didn't notice you.
David noticed you.
- 8 Terry arrived early, but it wasn't necessary.
Terry arrived early.
- 9 It wasn't necessary for me to buy any food yesterday.
I didn't any food yesterday.
- 10 It was a bad idea for us to be rude to the policeman!
We been rude to the policeman!

2 Rewrite each sentence beginning as shown. Do not change the meaning.

- 1 You were wrong to study so late!
You shouldn't *have studied so late* !
- 2 Did you manage to stop him?
Were ?
- 3 It wasn't necessary to work hard.
I didn't
- 4 Perhaps Tim has lost his way.
Tim might
- 5 It was possible for you to hurt yourself.
You could
- 6 It would have been a good idea to tell me.
You should
- 7 I'm sure the class enjoyed it.
The class must
- 8 I helped her but it wasn't necessary.
I needn't

Verbos modales

- ◆ consejo (advice)
 - ✓ should
 - ✓ ought to (es la forma formal de should)
 - x You should study harder
 - x You shouldn't smoke
 - x Should I cut my hair?

- ◆ Posibilidad (Possibility)
 - ✓ may
 - ✓ might (es la forma formal de may)
 - x It may rain tomorrow
 - x You might not win the lottery
 - x May I open the window?

- ◆ Habilidad (ability)
 - ✓ can
 - x I can play football
 - x I can't speak Chinese
 - x Can you speak louder?
 - ✓ be able to
 - x I am able to sing better than you
 - x I'm not able to run so fast.
 - x Are you able to teach?

- ◆ Obligación (Obligation)
 - ✓ have to
 - x You have to study harder
 - ✓ must to
 - x You mustn't drink to much
 - ✓ need to

- ◆ Modales futuros
 - ✓ will
 - x
 - ✓ shall (1ª singular/1ª plural)

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