MODAL VERBS: STRUCTURE & USE

# What are modal verbs?

* Can
* Could

**They are Auxiliary verbs** that provide additional and specific meaning to the main verb of the sentence

* May
* Might
* Must
* Shall
* Should
* Ought to
* Will
* Would

How do we use modals?

**S** **M**

**Subject**

**V**

**Verb**

**Example: Mary could play** the piano

**They do not accept conjugation They do not need other auxiliary verbs**

# Form

**There is no “s” in singular**

**There is no “do / does” in the question There is no “don’t / doesn’t” in the negative**

##  He **can** ski He cans ski or He can skis

 **Would** you like to come with me?

## Do you would like to come with me?

 They **can’t** be serious They don’t can be serious

Form

**Modal verbs** do not have **infinitives** or –**ing** forms

to can / ~~caning~~ to must /~~musting~~

**Modal verbs** are followed by an infinitive without **to**

She **must** study (strong obligation)

We **should** have gone the other way (recommendation) He **could** play football in his youth (ability in the past)

Form

**Modal verbs** do **not** have **all the tenses**

**Modal verbs** use other verbs to complete the tenses

**Can** is completed with **be able to Must** is completed with **have to**

They **can** play the piano They will **be able to** play the piano in the future You **must** come early You **had to** come early yesterday


# What do they express?

**They can have more than one meaning depending on the situations**

1. **Single Conce pt Mo d a l:** they have **o ne** meaning
2. **.** **D ouble Concept Moda l:** they have **two** meanings
3. **Modals in past**: They are used to express a situation in the past


# Categories

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Single concept Modals** | **Double Concept Modals** | **Modals in Past** |
| Will | May | Would have |
| Might | Must | Could have |
| Should | Would | Might have |
| Ought to | Shall | Should have |
| Had better | Could | May have |
|  | Can | Must have |

Single Concept Modal

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| **Modal** | **Concept** | **Examples** |
| **Will** | Future | Joe will travel to NY next week |
| **Might** | Small probability | I might move to Canada some day |
| **Should** | Recommendation | You should go to the doctor |
| **Ought to** | Formal recommendation | We ought to know about first aids |
| **Had better** | Warning ( avvertimento) | I had better study or I will fail the test |

Double Concept Modal

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| **Modal** | **Concept** | **Examples** |
| **May (1)** | Permission | May I come in? |
| **May (2)** | Good probability | We may visit Mexico this summer |
| **Must (1)** | Responsibility | Everyone must pay taxes |
| **Must (2)** | Assumption | She didn’t arrive. She must be sick |
| **Would (1)** | Past (used to) | When I was young, I would play soccer |
| **Would (2)** | Present unreal | I would buy the car but I can’t afford it |

Double Concept Modal

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| **Modal** | **Concept** | **Examples** |
| **Shall (1)** | Educated expression Offer | Excuse me, I shall go now Shall I clean it? |
| **Shall (2)** | Contractual obligation | The company shall pay on January 1st |
| **Could (1)** | Unreal Ability | I could go if I had time |
| **Could (2)** | Past Ability | She could play the piano (but she can’t anymore) |
| **Can (1)** | Present Ability | We can speak English |
| **Can (2)** | Permission | Can I have a candy? |



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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PROBABILITY/** **POSSIBILITY** | **ABILITY** | **PERMISSION** | **OBLIGATION/** **ADVICE** | **OFFERS** |
| **CAN** |  | I can play the piano | Can I go out tonight? |  |  |
| **CAN’T** | She can’t be his mum. She ‘s too young | I can’t speak German | Can I borrow the car? No, I can’t. |  |  |
| **MIGHT** | It might rain tomorrow |  |  |  |  |
| **COULD** | It could rain tomorrow | I could already read when I was two | Could I see your passport please, sir? |  |  |
| **MAY** | It may rain tomoroww |  | May I leave the table? |  |  |
| **MUST** | She must be his sister because they look alike. |  |  | You must leave before the clock strikes twelve. |  |
| **HAVE TO** |  |  |  | I have to study tonight. |  |
| **SHALL** |  |  |  | You shall pay on Tuesday | Shall I help you? |
| **SHOULD /** |  |  |  | You should see it. |  |
| **OUGHT TO** |  |  |  | It’s excellent. |  |
| **HAD BETTER** |  |  |  | You had better sleep more. |  |
| **WOULD** |  |  |  |  | Would you like a drink? |

Modals in the Past

 They are modals referred to actions that happened in the past

It **must have been** a difficult decision

They **should have invited** her to their wedding

**MODAL + HAVE + verb in past participle**

**MODAL PERFECT** **USE S** **E XAMPL E S**

MUST HAVE + P.P. Logical conclusion on a past event Peter has arrived late. He must

have been in a traffic jam

MAY / MIGHT HAVE + P.P. Deduction on a past event Joe may / might have taken the

wrong train.

COULD HAVE + P.P. Possibility to do something, gone unfulfilled

You could have played better

COULDN’T HAVE + P.P. Certainty that something couldn’t have

happened

WOULD HAVE + P.P. Desire to do something, but impossibility to do it for external causes

He couldn’t have passed because you hadn’t studied enough

I would have visited you, but I forgot your address

SHOULD /

OUGHT TO HAVE + P.P.

Lament on something that should have been done

You should / ought to have warned me earlier

SHOULDN’T HAVE + P.P. Critique on something that shouldn’t

have happened

He shouldn’t have told them

NE EDN’T HAVE + P.P. Somthing that wasn’t necessary doing You needn’t have bought it .


# Modals-like verbs:

### A few verbs which often serve as modals too.

**They need to be conjugated.**

#### Modal Concept Example

Like to Enjoy I like to watch TV

Want to Desire John wants to buy a car

Need to Necessity We really needed to talk to you Have to Obligation Susan had to pay the rent

Have got to Have to I’ve got to go now

Look forward to Future plan I look forward to see**ing** you again

# Practise

1. My son be home by now. Where can he be?
	1. Have to b. would should d. could

c.

1. I think your thumb is broken. You go to the emergency room.
	1. Might b. could ought to d. can

c.

1. If you are interested in losing weight, you try this new diet.
	1. Could b. mustn’t c. don’t have to d. had to
2. John’s fallen down the stairs! I call an ambulance!
	1. Will b. might c. may d. ought to
3. You come too early. We won’t leave until 9 o’clock.
	1. Has to b. must c. needn’t d. can’t

# Practise

1. Children be accompanied by an adult at the zoo.
	1. Ought to must c. would d. mustn’t

b.

1. You talk during tests. It’s forbidden!
	1. don’t have to mustn’t c. couldn’t d. ought to

b.

1. I can feel the heat. We be near the fire.
	1. Can b. would c. must d. have to
2. They hear him because he was whispering.
	1. Wouldn’t b. mustn’t c. shouldn’t d. couldn’t
3. You’ve never heard of Britney Spears? You be serious!
	1. Must b. had to c. can’t d. shouldn’t

# Practise

1. you like to have dinner with me tonight?
	1. Could b. may c. should would

d.

1. You let him hear about the party tomorrow. It’s a surprise!

a. mustn’t

b. wouldn’t

c. couldn’t

d. can

13. I speak to the Chief Councellor, please?

a. Must

b. May

c. Would

d. Need

14. He has arrived late. He missed the bus

a. Must have

b. Should have

c. Could have

d. must


# More practise

 Re-write the following sentences using modals so that they have the same meaning.

1. I suggest that you get a good lawyer! You shoul\_d get a lawyer

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1. A university degree isn’t necessary for that job.

You needn’t have a university \_degree for that job don’t have to have a university…

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1. Perhaps my father will pick you up.

My father may /\_mig\_ht\_pick\_you\_up

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1. 4. Eating is forbidden in class! You mus\_tn’t eat in class

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# More practise

 Re-write the following sentences using modals so that they have the same meaning.

1. Look at his dirty clothes! I’m sure he is a poor person.

He mus\_t be a poor person

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1. I don’t believe that the legend of Hercules is true because there are many contradictions.

The legend of Hercules can’t be true

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# Use your imagination

####  Think about these situations and create a sentence using modals.

1. We are going to Paris for a weekend. (Make suggestions about things to do)
2. We start school in September. (Talk about necessity)
3. Margaret is a very talented sportswoman. (Talk about ability)
4. You have just won the lottery! (Talk about possibility)
5. Peter has got a headache and a congested nose. (Give him some advice)
6. You want to borrow your uncle’s Mercedes Benz. (Ask for permission politely)