



An auxiliary is a helping verb. It is used with a main verb to form a **verb phrase**. For example,

- She **was calling** her friend.

Here the word **calling** is the main verb and the word **was** is an auxiliary verb.



The words **be, have, do, can, could, may, might, shall, should, must, will, would, used, need, dare, ought** are called **auxiliaries**.

The verbs **be, have** and **do** are often referred to as **primary auxiliaries**. They have a grammatical function in a sentence.

The rest in the above list are called **modal auxiliaries**, which are also known as **modals**. They express attitude like **permission, possibility**, etc.

Note the forms of the primary auxiliaries.

Auxiliary verbs	Present tense	Past tense
<b>be</b>	am, is, are	was, were
<b>do</b>	do, does	did
<b>have</b>	has, have	had

The table below illustrates the application of these primary verbs.

Primary auxiliary	Function	Example
<b>be</b>	used in the formation of continuous tenses	She <b>is</b> sewing a dress. I <b>am</b> leaving tomorrow.
	in sentences where the action is more important than the subject	The missing child <b>was</b> found.

	when followed by an infinitive, it is used to indicate a plan or an arrangement	We <b>are</b> to leave next week.
	denotes command	You <b>are</b> to see the Principal right now.
<b>have</b>	used to form the perfect tenses	The carpenter <b>has</b> worked well.
	used with the infinitive to indicate some kind of obligation	I <b>had</b> to work that day.
<b>do</b>	used to form the negative and interrogative of the simple present and the simple past	He <b>doesn't</b> work at all. <b>Did</b> you work that day?
	in the imperative form, it makes the statement more forceful	<b>Do</b> sit down quietly.

### Note



When **have** is used in the sense of take or receive, **do** is used to form questions or negatives. For example,

- Do you **have** cereals for breakfast?



### A. Choose the correct auxiliary from those given in brackets.

- Harry \_\_\_\_\_ go to the party. (**has/have**)
- We \_\_\_\_\_ going to party tonight. (**was/are**)
- I \_\_\_\_\_ finished my homework. (**have/am**)
- We \_\_\_\_\_ to visit that place in the morning. (**was/had**)
- \_\_\_\_\_ you want some coffee? (**do/have**)

6. I \_\_\_\_\_ not like you. (do/am)
7. I \_\_\_\_\_ want you to pass your exam. (had/do)
8. He speaks faster than she \_\_\_\_\_ (do/does)
9. You \_\_\_\_\_ to see the doctor immediately. (are/was)
10. This house \_\_\_\_\_ made of wood. (is/have)



Let us look at the functions of modal auxiliaries.

- ◆ **Can** usually expresses potential or ability. It is also used to indicate permission. For example,
  - Ram **can** bake a cake. (ability)
  - **Can** you break this door? (ability)
  - The doctor said, 'You **can** play basketball again.' (permission)
- ◆ **Could** is used as the past tense of **can** in indirect speech. It is used to indicate ability in the past. **Could** is also used to suggest a weak possibility in the future. For example,
  - Rob said that he **could** solve the problem. (ability in indirect speech)
  - He **could** drive a car when he was young. (ability in the past)
  - She **could** leave on Friday. (weak possibility)
- ◆ **May** is usually used when we ask for permission. It is also used to express a wish or to indicate a strong possibility. For example,
  - **May** I borrow your copy of *Julius Caesar*? (permission)
  - **May** you always prosper! (wish)
  - There **may** be a road block today. (possibility)
- ◆ **Might** is used as the past equivalent of **may**. It suggests a weak possibility. For example,
  - We **might** leave town next week.
- ◆ **Shall/Should** is used in the second and third person to express a promise or even a threat.
  - You **should** receive your wages tomorrow. (promise)
  - He **shall** not remain the captain anymore. (threat)
  - Which pen **should** I buy? (seeking advice)

### Note



Shall is used in the first person to express the future tense. For example,

- I **shall** be happy to see you.

- ◆ **Will** is used in the second and third person to express simple future time. **Would** is used to make polite requests. For example,
  - You **will** not speak.
  - He **will** come here.
  - **Would** you like to have a cup of tea? (**polite request**)

**Will** is used in the first person to express willingness, determination, promise, habit, intention or even a threat.

- I **will** do the work. (**willingness**)
- I **will** achieve my goal. (**determination**)
- We **will** help you. (**promise**)
- He **will** watch TV for hours. (**habit**)
- I **will** go to meet her today. (**intention**)
- We **will** sue him. (**threat**)

### Note



The expression **Will you...?** suggests an invitation.

For example,

- **Will you** have dinner with us?



### B. Fill in the blanks with **shall, should, will or would**.

1. We \_\_\_\_\_ be delighted to meet your son.
2. I am sorry. I \_\_\_\_\_ behave better next time.
3. You \_\_\_\_\_ be ashamed of yourself.
4. You \_\_\_\_\_ not lie.
5. I \_\_\_\_\_ call your parents today.
6. You \_\_\_\_\_ try to lose weight.
7. You \_\_\_\_\_ be promoted to the next rank if you succeed.
8. I \_\_\_\_\_ never go to Chennai.
9. You \_\_\_\_\_ do as you are told.
10. I \_\_\_\_\_ be much obliged to you for all the kindness you have shown.
11. I \_\_\_\_\_ certainly help you.
12. You \_\_\_\_\_ apologise for your behaviour.



Now learn some more modals.

- ◆ **Must** expresses necessity or obligation. For example,
  - We **must** reach on time.

It can express fixed determination. For example,

- I **must** be allowed to express my wish.

- ◆ **Ought** expresses moral obligation and desirability. It is always followed by **to** + **verb**. For example,

- We **ought** to put in our best effort.
- We **ought** to win.

It can be used to indicate present or future time. For example,

- I **ought** to apologise to him.

- ◆ **Used to** indicates a discontinued habit. For example,

- We **used to** go swimming in the evenings.

### Note



**Used to** also works as an adjective, meaning accustomed. For example, I am **used to** studying in candle light.

- ◆ **Need** denotes necessity or obligation. For example,
- We **need** to visit this place once.

It is commonly used in negatives and interrogatives.

- He **need** not give up studies.

**Need** as a finite verb means **want** or **require**.

- He does not **need** your money.

- ◆ **Dare** means **be bold enough to**. It is commonly used in interrogatives and negative sentences. For example,

- How **dare** you argue with me?



C. **Fill in the blanks with ought, have, has, must or may.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ you enjoy a prosperous life!
2. I have no information about this. Your father \_\_\_\_\_ be knowing.
3. We \_\_\_\_\_ obey the rules.
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ to reach the airport by 6 a.m.
5. It \_\_\_\_\_ rain this evening.
6. He \_\_\_\_\_ be on his way to the parliament by now.
7. He \_\_\_\_\_ to reach his new office on time.
8. I \_\_\_\_\_ to complete this task today.
9. We \_\_\_\_\_ be careful while driving.



**D. Choose the correct alternatives to fill in the blanks.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_ you like another cup of coffee? (**would/shall/should**)
2. Kartik \_\_\_\_\_ to play football before he took up rugby. (**used/is used/was used**)
3. \_\_\_\_\_ you show me the way to the nearest post office? (**may/might/could**)
4. He said he \_\_\_\_\_ be thirty next month. (**could/should/would**)
5. I was afraid that he \_\_\_\_\_ turn down my offer. (**may/might/must**)
6. If you \_\_\_\_\_ see him, ask him to meet me. (**would/shall/should**)
7. My teacher said, 'You \_\_\_\_\_ use my telephone whenever you need to.' (**might/may/should**)
8. I ran as fast as my legs \_\_\_\_\_ carry me. (**can/could/may**)
9. I don't think we \_\_\_\_\_ execute this plan. (**may/should/would**)
10. This \_\_\_\_\_ to be done with care. (**need/needs/have**)



**E. The highlighted auxiliaries have been wrongly used in this conversation. Correct them.**

**Rahul:** Hi, Pankaj! I just got into town and heard that you were in bed with a broken leg. It **shouldn't** be true!

**Pankaj:** Good to hear from you, Rahul. I am much better now. A week ago I **wouldn't** walk without crutches. Now I **am** walk slowly.

**Rahul:** I **haven't** believe it when I **was** told that you of all people **was** met with an accident. You are such a careful driver. When **do** you think you **must** join work?

**Pankaj:** The doctor says that I **ought to** be well enough to go back at the end of the week. I **used to** be fairly agile by then! He says that I **will** start with a stroll around the park and gradually increase the pace. Soon I **can** be jogging and jiggling once more! In fact, it **shall** be sooner than you **may** imagine.