

Modals

Modals are auxiliary verbs i.e., helping verbs which express the modality of a statement or a main verb.

Modality could be anything starting from the *request, likelihood, permission, ability, capacity, suggestions, orders, obligations* to *advice*. So, basically, the Modal verbs are used along with the main verb in order to give additional information regarding its nature. For instance, consider the statement given below.

1. Don't you **dare** to challenge his authority!
2. She **can** do it.
3. It **might** rain tonight.

In these three statements, “*dare*”, “*can*” and “*may*” are the modals. In the first statement, the Modal “*dare*” shows that it’s an order. In the second statement, “*can*” signifies the ability of the subject “She” and in the third one, the word “*might*” highlights some possibility. So, the Modals used in these sentences give us some additional information about the main verb, noun or subject of the statement.

List of Common Modals with Examples

In the English language, there are many modals. Let’s look at the ones which are used the most frequently.

Shall

The Modal “*shall*” is used to denote a *suggestion* or a *promise*. It can also be used to give an order. So, this particular modal can be used in many senses but what we need to remember is that it’s always used in the *present* or *future sense*.

Suggestion

Shall I do it for nation?

Order

You shall not enter the kitchen.

Promise

You shall get your backpacks back by tomorrow.

Should

The modal “*should*” can be used to express a suggestion or advice and duty or moral obligation.

Advice or suggestion

He should do his homework on time.

Duty or Moral obligation

We should respect our teachers, elders and parents.

Will

The modal “*will*” expresses potential. It can be used to denote determination, intention, willingness, to make a demand or even a promise.

Determination

We will win this match.

Intention/Willingness

We will go to Kedarnath next summer.
She will donate as much as she can.

Prediction/Assumption

I think she will come tomorrow.

Promise

I will buy you a smartwatch for your birthday.

Demand

Will you turn on the bulb?

Would

The modal “*would*” is used to make a polite request in the present moment and can be used to talk about a habit or happening of the past.

Polite Request	Would you hold this for them?
Habit	Earlier, I would go to an amusement park on the weekends.

Can

The modal “*can*” is used to take permission, make an offer, request or a suggestion, express a possibility, reflect on your ability and also can be used to reflect on one’s capacity or potential.

Permission/Request	Can she come with us?
Ability/Capacity	He can paint without using a paintbrush.
Offer	I can lend you some money if it’s urgent.
Possibility	She can be very rude at times.

Could

Could is usually used in the past tense to express ability. Also, it’s a politer version of the modal “*can*” and therefore can be used to make polite requests, offers or suggestions.

Ability	He could have done better.
Request	Could he come with us?
Suggestion	You could have bought a white dress.
Probability (Regarding a past event)	You could have gotten lost in the fair.

May

The modal “*may*” can be used to take permission, express some possibility and can also be used to make a wish.

Permission	May we come in?
Possibility	Her employer may not grant her a leave.
Wish	May he get better soon.

Might

Like the modal “*may*”, “*might*” can also be used to express possibility but only when the possibility is even lesser. It can also be used to denote a permission which was given in the past or express possibility in the past tense.

Possibility	She might be ill.
Permission	The professor said that we might go home if we want.
Possibility	I thought that she might back out from the tournament.

Must

The modal “*must*” is used to express necessity or obligation, an assumption or conclusion. It can also be used to express prohibition.

Necessity/Obligation	She must be home by 9.
Assumption/Conclusion	We must be in some grave danger.

Prohibition

One must not tell lies.

Ought to

The modal “*ought to*” is used to denote a moral obligation which is objective in nature or express an objective belief.

Moral Obligation

She ought to have completed the work diligently.

Belief

By the looks of it, she ought to be an amazing professor.

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