

Modal Verbs

English modal verbs are often challenging for many reasons, including both grammar and meaning. Here are some important general guidelines on the use of modal verbs:

1) English modal verbs are auxiliary verbs – they are always combined with other verbs to show complete meanings.

2) There are both single-word modal verbs and phrasal modal verbs.

The single-word modal verbs are:

can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would

Phrasal modal verbs include the following:

be able to, be going to, be supposed to, had better, have to, have got to, ought to, used to

3) All the single-word modal verbs above are followed by the simple form of verbs:

NOT this: ~~He may knows the answer.~~

NOR this: ~~He may knowing the answer.~~

NOR this: ~~He may know the answer.~~

NOR this: ~~He may known the answer.~~

BUT this: *He may know the answer.*

4) Most of the phrasal modal verbs include to:

be able to, be going to, be supposed to, have to, have got to, ought to, used to

With these phrasal modal verbs, the simple form of a verb follows to:

He's able to help us.

He's going to help us.

He's supposed to help us.

He has to help us.

He's got to help us.

He ought to help us.

He used to help us.

5) One of the phrasal modal verbs, 'had better', does not include 'to'.

Use the simple form of a verb after 'had better':

He'd better help us. (NOT: He'd better to help us.)

6) All of the modal verbs show meaning. When they are used with a verb, they show someone's feeling or attitude toward the action or situation that the verb shows.

7) Every modal verb has more than one use and/or meaning.

Special Note: In some grammar books, '**dare**' and '**need**' are included in lists of modals because their "behavior," in some situations, is similar to the "behavior" of modals:

'**Dare**' can be used with or without 'to' and a simple verb in negative statements and in questions:

He didn't dare (to) leave early. / Do I dare (to) leave early?

'**Need**' can be used with not and a simple verb:

He need not leave early.

SUPPLEMENT: 'Need' as a modal

As a modal verb, 'need' is most typically used in negative sentences or in affirmative sentences with a negative meaning. It expresses absence of necessity or obligation, and it is followed by a bare infinitive:

*Nobody **need** think that we are rich.*

*She **need** not arrive (needn't arrive) so early.*

*If you want good results, you will **need** to work harder.*

'**Need**' as a modal verb also occurs in interrogative sentences, but this use is much more formal:

Need you make so much noise? (MORE COMMON = Do you need to make so much noise?)

If used in statements, 'need to' is often used in the same context as 'have to' meaning necessity, but many times, 'need to' is used to express something that is less urgent, something in which you have a choice:

I have to work late tonight.

I need to work late tonight.

"CAN" is one of the most commonly used modal verbs in English. It can be used to express ability or opportunity, to request or offer permission, and to show possibility or impossibility.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|---------------------------|
| • I can ride a horse. | ABILITY |
| • We can stay with my brother when we are in Paris. | OPPORTUNITY |
| • She cannot stay out after 10 PM. | PERMISSION |
| • Can you hand me the stapler? | REQUEST |
| • Any child can grow up to be president. | POSSIBILITY |
| • It cannot be done. | IMPOSSIBILITY / INABILITY |

"COULD" is a modal verb used to express possibility or past ability as well as to make suggestions and requests. "Could" is also commonly used in conditional sentences as the conditional form of "can."

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|--------------|
| • Extreme rain could cause the river to flood the city. | POSSIBILITY |
| • Nancy could ski like a pro by the age of 11. | PAST ABILITY |
| • You could see a movie or go out to dinner. | SUGGESTION |
| • Could I use your computer to email my boss? | REQUEST |
| • We could go on the trip, if I didn't have to work this weekend. | CONDITIONAL |

"HAD BETTER" is most commonly used to make recommendations. It can also be used to express desperate hope as well as warn people.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| • You had better take your umbrella with you today. | RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE |
| • That bus had better get here soon! | DESPERATE HOPE |
| • You had better watch the way you talk to me in the future! | WARNING |

"HAVE TO" is used to express certainty, necessity, and obligation.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| • This answer has to be correct. | CERTAINTY |
| • The soup has to be stirred continuously to prevent burning. | NECESSITY |
| • They have to leave early. | OBLIGATION |

"HAVE GOT TO" is used to express necessity and obligation.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|------------|
| • Drivers have got to get a license to drive a car in the US. | NECESSITY |
| • I have got to be at work by 8:30 AM. | OBLIGATION |

"MAY" is a modal verb most commonly used to express possibility. It can also be used to give or request permission, although this usage is becoming less common.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|--------------------|
| • Cheryl may be at home, or perhaps at work. | POSSIBILITY |
| • Johnny, you may leave the table when you have finished your dinner. | GIVE PERMISSION |
| • May I use your bathroom? | REQUEST PERMISSION |

"MIGHT" is a modal verb most commonly used to express possibility. It is also often used in conditional sentences. English speakers can also use "might" to make suggestions or requests (this is generally less common in American English).

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| • Your purse might be in the living room. | POSSIBILITY |
| • If I didn't have to work, I might go with you. | CONDITIONAL |
| • You might visit the botanical gardens during your visit. | SUGGESTION |
| • Might I borrow your pen? | REQUEST |

"MUST" is a modal verb most commonly used to express certainty. It can also be used to express necessity or strong recommendation, although native speakers prefer the more flexible form "have to." "Must not" can be used to prohibit actions, but this sounds very severe; speakers prefer to use softer modal verbs such as "should not" or "ought not" to dissuade rather than prohibit.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| • This must be the right address! | CERTAINTY |
| • Students must pass an entrance examination to study at this school. | NECESSITY |
| • You must take some medicine for that cough. | STRONG RECOMMENDATION |
| • Jenny, you must not play in the street! | PROHIBITION |
| • It must not be very hard to do. | PROBABILITY |

"NEED" is most typically used in negative sentences or in affirmative sentences with a negative meaning. It expresses absence of necessity or obligation, and it is followed by a bare infinitive.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|----------------------|
| • Nobody need think that we are rich. | ABSENCE OF NECESSITY |
| • She need not arrive (needn't arrive) so early. | ABSENCE OF NECESSITY |
| • If you want good results, you will need to work harder. | OBLIGATION |

If used in statements, 'need to' is often used in the same context as 'have to' meaning necessity, but many times, 'need to' is used to express something that is less urgent, something in which you have a choice:

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| • I need to work late tonight. = I <u>have to</u> work late tonight. | NECESSITY |
|---|-----------|

"OUGHT TO" is used to advise or make recommendations. "Ought to" also expresses assumption or expectation as well as strong probability, often with the idea that something is deserved. "Ought not" (without "to") is used to advise against doing something, although American English may tend to prefer the less formal forms "should not" or "had better not."

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • You ought to stop smoking. | RECOMMENDATION |
| • Jim ought to get the promotion. | IT IS EXPECTED BECAUSE HE DESERVES IT. |
| • This stock ought to increase in value. | PROBABILITY |
| • Mark ought not drink so much. | ADVICE AGAINST SOMETHING (NOTICE THERE IS NO "TO") |

"SHALL" is a modal verb used to indicate future action. It is most commonly used in sentences with "I" or "we," and is often found in suggestions, such as "Shall we go?" "Shall" is also frequently used in promises or voluntary actions. In formal English, the use of "shall" to describe future events often expresses inevitability or predestination. "Shall" is much more commonly heard in British English than in American English; American English tends to prefer the use of other forms, although sometimes "shall" is used in suggestions or formalized language.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| • Shall I help you? | SUGGESTION |
| • I shall never forget where I came from. | PROMISE |
| • He shall become our next king. | PREDESTINATION |
| • I'm afraid Mr. Smith shall become our new director. | INEVITABILITY |

"SHOULD" is a modal verb most commonly used to make recommendations or give advice. It can also be used to express obligation as well as expectation.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| • When you go to Berlin, you should visit the palaces in Potsdam. | RECOMMENDATION |
| • You should focus more on your family and less on work. | ADVICE |
| • I really should be in the office by 7:00 AM. | OBLIGATION |
| • By now, they should already be in Dubai. | EXPECTATION |

"WILL" is a modal verb used with promises or voluntary actions that take place in the future. "Will" can also be used to make predictions about the future.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| • I promise that I will write you every single day. | PROMISE |
| • I will make dinner tonight. | VOLUNTARY ACTION |
| • He thinks it will rain tomorrow. | PREDICTION |

"WOULD" is a modal verb most commonly used to create conditional verb forms. It also serves as the past form of the modal verb "will." Additionally, "would" can indicate repetition in the past.

EXAMPLES:

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| • If he were an actor, he would be in adventure movies. | CONDITIONAL |
| • I knew that she would be very successful in her career. | PAST OF "WILL" |
| • When they first met, they would always have picnics on the beach. | REPETITION |

Modal Verb PRACTICE 1:*This is EXACTLY what it will look like on the B2 Exam***[Page 4]**

Choose the correct answer (a, b, c, or d) for the following sentences (1 – 6).

There is ONLY ONE correct answer for each question. **CIRCLE** your answer (a, b, c or d).

- (1) What ____ you do if you lost your job?
a) shall b) can c) need d) would
- (2) ____ I come with you?
a) Couldn't b) Could c) Needn't d) Need
- (3) You ____ better clean this mess up, or you won't get any ice cream.
a) would b) should c) had d) ---
- (4) You ____ not have worried about the dinner - it was delicious!
a) need b) can c) will d) had
- (5) You really ____ be wearing your seat belt.
a) have b) must c) should d) need
- (6) It ____ be hard to work 60-hours a week.
a) have to b) must c) shall d) needs to

Modal Verb PRACTICE 2:

Choose the correct answer (a, b, c, or d) for the following sentences (1 – 15).

There is ONLY ONE correct answer for each question. **CIRCLE** your answer (a, b, c or d).*CHOOSE ACCORDING TO THE
FUNCTION THE SENTENCE IS**ATTEMPTING TO EXPRESS
↓↓↓*

- (1) You ____ listen to the professor during the lecture.
a) could b) shall c) must d) would
NECESSITY
- (2) He ____ to be home by seven o'clock.
a) should b) ought c) could d) need
PROBABILITY
- (3) I ____ to renew my visa next week.
a) had better b) need c) must d) got
NECESSITY
- (4) You ____ be in two places at the same time.
a) cannot b) should not c) need not d) could
IMPOSSIBILITY / INABILITY
- (5) This particular type of car ____ drive cross country.
a) would b) shall c) have to d) can
ABILITY
- (6) When I was in college I ____ stay up all night without consequence.
a) need b) could c) will d) have got to
PAST ABILITY
- (7) If I inherited a billion dollars, I ____ buy Google.
a) can b) should c) would d) shall
CONDITIONAL
- (8) I ____ send you the results when I get them.
a) will b) need c) had to d) must to
VOLUNTARY ACTION / PROMISE
- (9) Margaret ____ not jump to conclusions.
a) shall b) can c) may d) should
ADVICE
- (10) If Sara's parents agree, you ____ go to the sleepover at her house this weekend.
a) will b) have to c) should d) can
PERMISSION / POSSIBILITY
- (11) We ____ go to dinner after the movie.
a) must b) could c) need d) better
SUGGESTION / POSSIBILITY
- (12) A reader ____ borrow up to six books at any one time.
a) may b) will c) ought to d) must
GIVE PERMISSION
- (13) You ____ better pay attention, or you will fail the exam!
a) --- b) would c) had d) could
RECOMMENDATION / ADVICE / WARNING
- (14) My dry cleaning ____ be ready this afternoon.
a) can b) need c) should d) have got to
EXPECTATION
- (15) I ____ have to cancel my plans for Saturday night.
a) must b) might c) need d) can
POSSIBILITY

Some helpful vocabulary for reading exercise below:

agent (n.) – a professional (in Real Estate, property)
 available (adj.) – ready; able to be used, easily be bought or found
 condominium (n.) – an independent living space or unit in a larger building or complex
 eager (adj.) – be excited about something that will happen
 flake (expression) – an unreliable person
 furnish (v.) – put furniture and other things into a room or house
 lease (n.) – a legal agreement to pay rent; *We have a twelve-month lease.*
 listings (pl. n.) – information about available places to live (in newspaper or an online database)
 purchases (pl. n.) – buys
 show up (verbal expression) – appear as expected or agreed

Read the following text and select the modal form that best completes the sentences (1 - 16) and the context from the options below (a, b, c or d).

Moving into an Apartment

Before this year, I (1) _____ move out of my parents' house because I did not have a job. But now that I have finished college and have a job, I realize that living at home (2) _____ drive my parents and me crazy. Unfortunately, it's not so easy to find an apartment in the city. Without an agent, you (3) _____ not be able to find all the available listings. Because of my agent's help, I found a wonderful condominium this morning and signed the lease. Before now, I couldn't sign a lease, but now I (4) _____ because I am twenty-one.

I asked my friends to help me move because I knew that I (5) _____ fit all my possessions into my little car. My best friend said, "I (6) _____ able to help you move next week." He added, "I (7) _____ rather help earlier in the morning than later in the afternoon." My father also offered to help me move. He (8) _____ really be eager to have me move out!

Another friend told me that he (9) _____ me move, but he never showed up. What a flake! With the help of three friends, I (10) _____ get all my possessions into the new condo.

My parents are happy for me, but warned, "You (11) _____ spend all your money each month. Save a little extra money for unexpected emergencies." I know that everyone (12) _____ to save a little extra money, but it is hard with so many bills to pay. I made a few purchases. The first thing that I (13) _____ was furniture. I (14) _____ on the wood floor, but it was too hard, so I bought a sofa-bed.

It (15) _____ about a year until I am able to completely furnish my apartment. By this time next year, I (16) _____ a lot about living independently.

- | | | | | |
|------|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| (1) | a) may not | b) cannot | c) could not | d) shall not |
| (2) | a) could | b) should | c) would have | d) should have |
| (3) | a) shall | b) should | c) might | d) can |
| (4) | a) able | b) can | c) have to | d) can do |
| (5) | a) shall not | b) not able to | c) had better not | d) couldn't |
| (6) | a) will be | b) could be | c) must be | d) have got to be |
| (7) | a) --- | b) shall | c) might | d) would |
| (8) | a) must to | b) will | c) must | d) ought to |
| (9) | a) would help | b) would to help | c) was going help | d) should help |
| (10) | a) am able to | b) can | c) was able to | d) could have |
| (11) | a) mustn't | b) don't have to | c) shall not have | d) aren't able to |
| (12) | a) must | b) is supposed | c) had better | d) need |
| (13) | a) must have | b) had to have | c) must have had | d) would have had |
| (14) | a) should sleep | b) must have slept | c) could have slept | d) am able to sleep |
| (15) | a) must take | b) will have taken | c) would take | d) will take |
| (16) | a) must learn | b) will learn | c) would learn | d) will have learned |

Modal / Auxiliary Verbs PRACTICE 3: Key Word Sentence Transformations**[Page 6]**

For Questions 1-15, complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence using the word given. **Do not change** the word given. You must use between two (2) and five (5) words including the word given.

- (1) He looks really disappointed. Obviously, he expected to win the race. EXPECTED
He looks really disappointed. He _____ to win the race.
- (2) I'm sure he's not Michael Jackson. He died a few years ago! BE
He _____ because he died a few years ago.
- (3) I'm sure he didn't understand what I was saying to him. MISUNDERSTOOD
He _____ what I was saying to him.
- (4) I prefer to arrive an hour early. RATHER
I _____ an hour early.
- (5) It was very bad of you to use my mobile without asking my permission. OUGHT
You _____ before you used my mobile.
- (6) He is so rich that I am sure he is always happy. MUST
He is so rich that _____ happy.
- (7) I went to the office then remembered it was my day off. HAVE
I _____ the office as it was my day off.
- (8) You were expected to answer all the questions on the exam paper. ANSWERED
You _____ all the questions on the examination paper.
- (9) He looks so pale that I'm sure he has seen a ghost. MUST
He _____ ghost because now he looks very pale.
- (10) Perhaps we missed the correct turning. MIGHT
We _____ the correct turning.
- (11) I'm afraid you can't smoke in here. ALLOWED
You _____ in here.
- (12) They will expect you to wear a suit for the interview. HAVE
You _____ a suit for the interview.
- (13) I'd see a doctor if I were you. OUGHT
You _____ a doctor.
- (14) He couldn't swim until he was in his twenties. ABLE
He _____ until he was in his twenties.
- (15) We got a table at the restaurant without a reservation. NEED
We _____ book a table at the restaurant.

Academic Vocabulary / Word Formation

Complete the following sentences (1 - 20) by filling in the blank spaces with **the proper form of the word given for that sentence**. Use ONLY ONE word per blank space: DO NOT add any words [e.g. prepositions].

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| (1) ABSENCE | She has been _____ from school for several days. |
| (2) ABILITY | You should be _____ to evaluate your own work. |
| (3) ADVISE | I really need to get some basic financial _____. |
| (4) CHALLENGING | The role will be the biggest _____ of his acting career. |
| (5) EXPRESS | I could tell from the _____ on her face that something serious had happened. |
| (6) FLEXIBLE | He tried to impress me by _____ his huge muscles. |
| (7) FREQUENTLY | Houses are sold here with greater _____ than in most other parts of the country. |
| (8) HARMFUL | There were those who found the joke offensive, but Johnson insisted it was just a bit of _____ fun. |
| (9) NECESSITY | Is it _____ for all of us to be present at the meeting this afternoon? |
| (10) OBLIGATION | Tenants are _____ to pay their rent on time. |
| (11) POSSESSIONS | Different workers _____ different skills. |
| (12) PREFER | Choosing furniture is largely a matter of personal _____. |
| (13) REPETITION | Please don't _____ what I've just told you to anyone else. |
| (14) RESERVATION | These seats are _____ for the elderly and women with babies. |
| (15) SEVERE | Their daughter was _____ injured in a car accident. |
| (16) SITUATION | The school is _____ near the park. |
| (17) STATEMENTS | It is often _____ that humans use only 10 per cent of thier brain. |
| (18) UNFORTUNATELY | You're very _____ to have found such a nice house. |
| (19) URGENT | "Come straight away!" she said _____. |
| (20) WONDERFUL | The sight of the Grand Canyon stretching out before them filled them with _____. |

Prepositions

Complete the following sentences (1 - 15) by filling in the blank spaces with the proper preposition. You may use ONLY ONE word for each blank space.

- (1) Atheists do not believe _____ God.
- (2) Two atoms of hydrogen combine _____ one atom of oxygen to form a molecule of water.
- (3) It's important to focus _____ your strengths and to minimize your weaknesses.
- (4) There was a flash of light followed _____ an explosion.
- (5) Drinking lots of water is good _____ the complexion.*
- (6) We did an analysis of the way that government money has been spent _____ the past.
- (7) Donald is 30 years old, but he still lives _____ home with his parents.
- (8) He was unwilling to make a prediction _____ which books would sell best in the coming year.
- (9) Two huge boulders had to be moved out _____ the way before the trucks could get through.
- (10) The whole ceremony took place _____ complete silence.
- (11) The chainsaw is a dangerous tool - it should be used _____ great care.
- (12) No artificial sweeteners are used _____ this product.
- (13) Sulphur is also used _____ sterilize equipment.
- (14) Did you go _____ the office today?
- (15) I often read English magazines, but with the help _____ a dictionary.

* complexion = the natural appearance of the skin on a person's face, especially its colour or quality.

Reading Comprehension

[Page 8]

Read the following passage and choose the best answer (a, b, c, d or e) for each of the comprehension questions (1 - 7).

In the early 1920's, settlers came to Alaska looking for gold. They traveled by boat to the coastal towns of Seward and Knik, and from there by land into the gold fields. The trail they used to travel inland is known today as the Iditarod Trail, one of the National Historic Trails designated by the Congress of the United States. The Iditarod Trail quickly became a major thoroughfare in Alaska, as the mail and supplies were carried across this trail. People also used it to get from place to place, including the priests, ministers, and judges who had to travel between villages. In the winter, the settlers' only means of travel down this trail was via dog sled.

Once the gold rush ended, many gold-seekers went back to where they had come from, and suddenly there was much less travel on the Iditarod Trail. The introduction of the airplane in the late 1920's meant dog teams were no longer the standard **mode** of transportation, and of course with the airplane carrying the mail and supplies, there was less need for land travel in general. The final blow to the use of the dog teams was the appearance of snowmobiles.

By the mid 1960's, most Alaskans didn't even know the Iditarod Trail existed, or that dog teams had played a crucial role in Alaska's early settlements. Dorothy G. Page, a **self-made historian**, recognized how few people knew about the former use of sled dogs as working animals and about the Iditarod Trail's role in Alaska's colorful history. To raise awareness about this aspect of Alaskan history, she came up with the idea to have a dog sled race over the Iditarod Trail. She presented her idea to an enthusiastic *musher*, as dog sled drivers are known, named Joe Redington, Sr. Soon the Pages and the Redingtons were working together to promote the idea of the Iditarod race.

Many people worked to make the first Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Race a reality in 1967. The Aurora Dog Musher's Club, along with men from the Adult Camp in Sutton, helped clear years of overgrowth from the first nine miles of the Iditarod Trail. To raise interest in the race, a \$25,000 purse was offered, with Joe Redington donating one acre of his land to help raise the funds. The short race, approximately 27 miles long, was put on a second time in 1969.

After these first two successful races, the goal was to lengthen the race a little further to the ghost town of Iditarod by 1973. However, in 1972, the U.S. Army reopened the trail as a winter exercise, and so in 1973, the decision was made to take the race all the way to the city of Nome—over 1,000 miles. There were many who believed it could not be done and that it was crazy to send a bunch of mushers out into the vast, uninhabited Alaskan wilderness. But the race went! 22 mushers finished that year, and to date over 400 people have completed it.

Comprehension Questions

- (1) The primary purpose of this passage is to...
 - a) ...recount the history of the Iditarod trail and the race that memorializes it.
 - b) ...describe the obstacles involved in founding the Iditarod race.
 - c) ...outline the circumstances that led to the establishment of the Iditarod Trail.
 - d) ...reestablish the important place of the Iditarod Trail in Alaska's history
- (2) Based on information in the passage, it can be inferred that all of the following contributed to the disuse of the Iditarod Trail except...
 - a) ...more modern forms of transportation.
 - b) ...depleted gold mines.
 - c) ...highway routes to ghost towns.
 - d) ...reduced demand for land travel.
- (3) As used in paragraph 2, which is the best definition for '**mode**'?
 - a) formula
 - b) way
 - c) preference
 - d) option
- (4) According to the passage, the initial Iditarod race...
 - a) ...was funded through the sale of musher entrance fees.
 - b) ...was founded by an advocate for Alaskan history.
 - c) ...ended at the ghost town of Iditarod.
 - d) ...boasted a total of 400 entrants.
- (5) As used in paragraph 3, the phrase '**self-made historian**' implies that Dorothy G. Page...
 - a) ...was employed by the state to keep its dog sled history alive.
 - b) ...was determined to honor the glories of the gold rush in spite of her questionable credentials.
 - c) ...had pursued the study of Alaska's history out of her own interest.
 - d) ...had personally educated others about Alaska's history.
- (6) In 1925, when a diphtheria outbreak threatened the lives of people in the remote town of Nome, the government used the Iditarod Trail to transport medicine nearly 700 miles to the town. If the author chose to include this fact in the passage, it would best fit in:
 - a) paragraph 1
 - b) paragraph 2
 - c) paragraph 3
 - d) paragraph 5
- (7) Based on information in the passage, it can be inferred that because the U.S. Army reopened the Iditarod Trail in 1972, ...
 - a) ...more people could compete in the Iditarod race.
 - b) ...the mushers had to get permission from the U.S. Army to hold the race.
 - c) ...the trail was cleared all the way to Nome.
 - d) ...the Iditarod race became a seasonal Army competition.