

# Modals in Telugu

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[This document has been reviewed by an independent native speaker expert.](#)

## BODY OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

### A. EPISTEMIC

#### A1 Epistemic Necessity

(1) Ben goes swimming every day. Ben is not obliged or required to go swimming; it is just a habit of his. It is now time for Ben to be swimming... so [Ben MUST be swimming \(right now\)](#).

*Ben tappakuNdaa ippudu iidutunnaadu (prastutaM/ippudu)*

Ben **MOD** now swim-CONTD.3rd.PER-SG.M

Ben ippudu iidu-tunD-aali

Ben now swim-CONT-MOD

(2) You know that John goes to school at 9am every day. You look at the clock and see it is 9am, therefore [John MUST be at school](#).

*John tappakuNdaa school daggara unnaadu.*

John **MOD** School P be-PST-3rd.PERS.SG.M

John school-daggara unD-aali

John school-in be-MOD

(3) The math teacher says: The ball is in A or in B or in C. It is not in A. It is not in B. So, **it MUST be in C**. Adapted from von Fintel & Gillies 2007.

<i>idi</i>	<b><i>tappakundaa</i></b>	<i>si-lo</i>	<i>undi.</i>
It	<b>MOD</b>	C-in	be

<i>idi</i>	<i>si</i>	<i>lo</i>	<i>unD-aali.</i>
It	C	in	be-MOD

(4) Tim is calling for his dog. The dog is not coming. Tim looks for the dog in the kitchen, bedroom, living room, (in every room in the house) but the dog is not in any of those rooms. Therefore, Tim thinks/concludes that **the dog MUST not be in the house**.

<i>kukka</i>	<b><i>tappakundaa</i></b>	<i>int-lo</i>	<i>ledu.</i>
Dog	<b>MOD</b>	house-in	NEG-AGR

## A2 Epistemic Weak Necessity

(5) You know that Ann goes hiking from 7am until 8am every day. Most of the time Ann goes to the lake, but sometimes she goes to the mountains. It is now 7:30am. You say to your friend: **Ann SHOULD be at the lake right now**.

<i>Ann</i>	<i>prastutam</i>	<i>lake</i>	<i>daggara</i>	<i>unD-aali</i>
Ann	right.now	lake	at.ADP	be-MOD

(6) (Imagine that) you used to live in Goa. You are not living in Goa anymore. You notice how different the weather is in the UK, where you live right now. You know that it often rains in Goa, especially in the afternoon, but not necessarily every day. Now it's the afternoon, so you think **it SHOULD be raining now in Goa**.

<i>Ippudu</i>	<i>goa-lo varsham</i>	<i>padu-tund-aali</i>
Now	Goa-in rain	fall-CONT-MOD

(7) When the light is on at Mary's house, it usually means that she is home. You want to visit Mary. You walk past Mary's house and notice that the light is on. However, there is no car in the driveway. You think to yourself: **Mary SHOULD be at home**. ~~but it's not certain~~.

<i>Mary int-lo unD-aali</i>
Mary home-in be-MOD

### A3 Epistemic Possibility

(8) The teacher is not consistent. The students never know if he's going to come or not to teach class. Today, it's time to start class and the students are waiting again. [He MIGHT / #must be coming to school today.](#)

*aayana iiroju school-ki*                      *vast-un-doccu*  
he            today school-DAT            come-be-MOD

(9) Grace is looking for her necklace. She looks in her wardrobe and on top of the wardrobe. It's not there. She looks on top of the TV. It's not there. She looks in her backpack. It's not there. Wait! She didn't check her sister's wardrobe yet. [Grace's necklace MIGHT / #must be lost.](#)

*Grace-yokka necklace*                      *tappi poo-yund-occu*  
*Grace-GEN necklace*                      *missing go-be-MOD*

(10) Charles is looking for his pet cat, but cannot find it. He knows that his cat is very elusive/mysterious. Charles tells his sister:  
The cat MAY be inside. The cat MAY also be outside.  
(The task is not only to translate these two sentences individually, but to keep in mind the sequencing i.e., these sentences are not to be used in isolation).

*pilli lopala und-occu*                      *gaanii bayata gaanii und-occu*  
Cat Inside/P    be-MOD                      CONJ Outside CONJ be-MOD  
“The cat might be inside or outside [we don't know]”

(11) Daniel lives in London and his friend has recently moved to New York. Daniel's parents told him that he is not allowed to go and see his friend in New York because it is too far away. You heard that Daniel is leaving London next week but you don't know where he will go. Daniel usually does things that he is not permitted to do. You think [Daniel MIGHT go to New York.](#)

*Daniel Newyork-ki po-vaccu*  
Daniel N.York-DAT    Go-MOD  
Here *vaccu* seems to indicate the epistemic possibility

Literally: *vaccu* ‘to come’/‘to know’

### A4 Epistemic Non-necessity

(7') When the light is on at Mary's house, it usually means that she is home. You want to visit Mary. You walk past Mary's house and notice that the light is on. However, there is no car in the driveway. You think to yourself: Mary should be at home, but it is NOT NECESSARILY THE CASE THAT she is / [she MAY NOT be \[at home\]](#) / it is NOT CERTAIN that she is.

Mary    *int-i (illu 'house')-lo    und-aka-po.u vaccu (undu+aka+po+vaccu)*  
 Mary    House-OBLIQUE-in    Be-NOT-Light.verb-MOD

*Mary inti daggar*  
 “Mary is not at home”

*illu* ‘house’: oblique form of *illu* is *inti*

## A5 Epistemic impossibility

(1') Ben goes swimming every day. Ben is not obliged or required to go swimming; it is just a habit of his. It is now time for Ben to be swimming... so Ben CAN'T be at home.

*Ben int-lo undadu*  
*Ben house-in be.Neg.3ms*

(3') The math teacher says: The ball is in A or in B or in C. We opened box A, and the ball is there. There is only one ball. So, it MUST NOT / CAN'T be in C.

*C-lo ball undadu*  
 C-in ball be.Neg.3MS

## B. DEONTIC

### B1 Deontic Necessity

(12) In Indonesia, the law states that when you ride a motor bike... You MUST wear a helmet.

neevu/meeru helmet    pettu-ko-*vaali*.  
 You                    helmet    wear-reflexive-MOD  
 “You wear helmet”

*neevu/meeru    helmet    pettu-ko-vaali.*  
 You                    helmet    wear-reflexive-MOD

Some additional data involving *vaali*:

(i) *neevu            helmet            pettukunnaavu*  
 “You are wearing a helmet”

(ii) *neevu helmet            pettu-ko-vaali.*  
 You                    helmet    wear-reflexive-PRE  
 “You should wear a helmet”

(iii) *neenu helmet pettukunnaanu*

“I am waering a helmet”

(iv) *neenu helmet tappakundaa pettukovaali*

“I should wear a helmet”

(13) You are going to visit your friend in the hospital. When you enter into the hospital, you stop at the information desk to inquire what room your friend is in. But the woman at the information desk tells you that you can’t visit your friend now because it’s already 8pm. She says, “I’m sorry, the hospital regulations say that... **Visitors MUST leave by 6pm.**”

*Visitors 6 pm lope {kala/raa/vellipo}-vaali*

Visitors 6 pm before meet/come/leave-MOD

## B2 Deontic Weak Necessity

(16) Your friend is having a birthday party. She tells you that she would like it if everyone invited wore formal clothes, but that it is not necessary to wear formal clothes to attend. You think to yourself... **I OUGHT TO wear formal clothes to the party.**

*nenu party-ki formal clothes vesu-ko-vaali.*

I party-DAT formal clothes wear-Refl-MOD

*nenu party ki formal clothes vesu-ko-vaali.*

I party DAT formal clothes wear-Refl-MOD

(17) Your friend tells you that the rules of the restaurant state that employees must wash their hands after going to the bathroom. You reply to your friend:... Non-employees OUGHT TO wash their hands too!

*Non-employees kuudaa vaari cetulu kadu-kko-vaa.li*

Non-Employeesalso/too-PSP their hands wash-refl-MOD

(18) In England, it is recommended that face coverings be worn in stores, but it is not a legal requirement. You plan on going shopping, and you think to yourself... **I OUGHT TO wear a face covering.**

*nenu face covering vesu-ko-vaa.li*

I Face covering wear-myself-MOD.

*nenu face covering vesu-ko-vaa.li*

I Face covering wear-myself-MOD.

## B3 Deontic Possibility

(19) The ferris wheel ride is only for children under 12 years of age. Martin is 10 years of age. It is not obligatory for Martin to go on the ride if he doesn't want to. Martin MAY ride the ferris wheel.

<i>Martin</i>	<i>ferris wheel ni</i>	<i>ekk-occu/nadapa-v-occu.</i>
Martin	Ferris Wheel-ACC	climb-MOD

#*Martin ferris wheel ni nadap-aali*

(20) According to the rules of the hospital, only family members are allowed to enter the patient's room during visiting hours. You came to visit your sister, but it was after visiting hours. But the really nice nurse says... You MAY enter.

*neevu / meeru velloccu. (vellu 'to go') / vella-voccu*

(21) You are making plans for tomorrow night to meet up with your friend. Your friend says:

[You can stay overnight or you can go home.](#)

You can stay overnight. You can also go home.

*neevu/meeru raatri ki (ikkade) und-occu/unda-vaccu ledaa neevu/meeru intiki vell-occu/vella-vaccu*

You night Dat (here) stay-MOD or you home-Dat go-MOD

(22) Alice fell down the stairs and broke her arm a while ago. She hasn't been lifting her baby while her arm was hurt because the baby is heavy. Finally, she has recovered, and she went to the doctor for a final check-up. The doctor gave her permission to lift her baby. But when she got home after her visit to the doctor, Alice found that she is still too weak to lift her baby... [Alice CAN lift her baby.](#)

<i>Alice</i>	<i>tana</i>	<i>paapa-ni</i>	<i>ettu-ko-vaccu.</i>
Alice	her	Baby-ACC	lift-Refl-MOD

(23) Beth's teacher told her class that it was okay to go swimming, but Beth doesn't want to because she cannot swim! [Beth CAN go swimming.](#)

i.e. Beth COULD go swimming, Beth is ALLOWED/PERMITTED to go swimming, but she can't swim.

*Beth Swimming ki velloccu*

Beth swimming-Dat go-MOD

## B4 Deontic non-necessity

(16') Your friend is having a birthday party. She tells you that she would like it if everyone invited wore formal clothes, but that it is not necessary to wear formal clothes to attend. You think to yourself... I ought to wear formal clothes to the party, but [I DON'T HAVE TO / NEEDN'T wear formal clothes.](#)

<i>nenu formal clothes</i>	<i>vesu-ko-vaalsina</i>	<i>avasaram ledu</i>
I	formal clothes wear-Reflx.-NMNL	Need NEG.MOD

(18') In England, it is recommended that face coverings be worn in stores, but it is not a legal requirement. You plan on going shopping, and you think to yourself... I OUGHT TO wear a face covering, but **I DON'T HAVE TO / NEEDN'T** wear face coverings.

<i>nenu face coverings</i>	<i>vesu-ko-vaals-ina</i>	<i>avasaram ledu</i>
I	face coverings wear-Reflx.-NMNL	need NEG.MOD

## B5 Deontic impossibility

(12') In Indonesia, the law states that when you ride a motor bike... **You MUST NOT / MAY NOT ride a motor bike without a helmet.**

<i>neevu/meeru helmet lekundaa</i>	<i>motor bike nadap-adaani-ki ledu</i>
You	helmet without motor bike ride-NMNL-Dat NEG.MOD

<i>neevu/meeru helmet lekundaa</i>	<i>motor bike nadap-a ledu</i>
You	helmet without motor bike ride-INF NEG.MOD

(13') You are going to visit your friend in the hospital. When you enter into the hospital, you stop at the information desk to inquire what room your friend is in. But the woman at the information desk tells you that you can't visit your friend now because it's already 8pm. She says, "I'm sorry, the hospital regulations say that... **Visitors MUST NOT / MAY NOT stay after 6pm.**"

<i>Visitors 6 pm taruvaata unda-kuuda-du</i>
Visitors 6 pm after be-NEG-3ns

<i>Visitors 6 pm taruvaata unD-aDaani-ki ledu</i>
Visitors 6 pm after be-NMNL-Dat Neg.MOD

<i>Visitors 6 pm taruvaata unD-a ledu</i>
Visitors 6 pm after be-INF Neg.MOD

## C. TELEOLOGICAL

### C1 Teleological Necessity

(24) There is only one main road from Location A to Location B... If you go from Location A to Location B, **you HAVE TO take this road.**

<i>neevu/meeru ii</i>	<i>roddu meedu gaa</i>	<i>vel-laali</i>
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You            this            Road PSP    ADV-Marker            go-MOD

(25) Team A are playing in a tournament/competition/championship. In order to advance... [Team A has to beat Team B.](#)

*Team A Team B meeda gela-vaali.*  
Against win-MOD

(26) The best pizza in town is sold at Gino's. You have invited your sister for dinner, and you decide to order pizza. You tell your sister: [We have to order from Gino's](#) to eat the best pizza.

*manamu Gino nundi order cey-aali*  
We            Gino From order do-MOD

Comment: *tappakundaa* would not be used in these examples, but in an example like "In order to get a good grade, you must score 80%".

## C2 Teleological Weak Necessity

(27) There are different ways to get to the shopping centre. You can go by foot, by tram/horse-carriage/truck/train/bus/public van, or drive/motorcycle/bicycle yourself. You are not sure how to go. Your friend advises you to get the bus because it is cheaper... To get to the shopping centre, [you should take the bus.](#)

*neevu/meeru    bus-lo            vel-laali*  
You            bus-in            go-MOD

(28) There are 3 ways to get to the seaside: a direct road, taking smaller roads, or a combination. Your friend says that taking the smaller roads is very beautiful. According to him, [you should go via the small roads.](#)

*neevu/meeru cinna roddu-meedu gaa vel-laali..*  
You            small road-P    go-MOD

(29) Your friend wants to buy a new shirt for her job at a reasonable price. There are many nice shops for professional clothes in the area, and you work at one of them and think it offers good prices. You say: [You should come to my shop](#) to buy a new shirt.

*neevu/meeru naa shop-ki            raa-vaali.*  
You            my shop-DAT    come-MOD



### C3 Teleological Possibility

(30) There are two different ways to get to the mountains from the city centre. Route 1 is inland and route 2 goes around via the coast. Both take around 7 hours by bus and they are equally beautiful... [You can take route 1.](#)

*neevu/meeru route 1 teesuko-vaccu*

You            Route 1    take-MOD

(31) There are two swimming pools in the town with the exact same design and both are an equal distance from your house. You plan to go swimming later on but have no specific desire for which pool to go to. You tell your sister... [We can go to that swimming pool](#) on the west side.

*manamu aa swimming pool ki vell-occu*

We            that swimming pool DAT go-MOD

(32) Your friend wants to buy a new shirt for her job. Since there are many nice shops for professional clothes in the area, you say... [You can go to this shop.](#)

*neevu/meeru ii            shop-ki            vell-occu*

I            that            shop-DAT            go-MOD

### C4 Teleological non-necessity

(27') There are different ways to get to the shopping centre. You can go by foot, by tram/horse-carriage/truck/train/bus/public van, or drive/motorcycle/bicycle yourself. You are not sure how to go. Your friend advises you to get the bus because it is cheaper... To get to the shopping centre, you should take the bus, but [you don't need to take the bus.](#)

*neevu/meeru    bus ekki /teesukune    avasaram ledu*

You            bus climb/take need NEG

### C5 Teleological impossibility

(24') There is only one main road from Location A to Location B... If you are going from Location A to Location B, [you cannot take another/\(a different\) road.](#)

*nuvvu/meeru    maro    roddu    teesuko kuudadu*

You            another Road    take    NEG

*nuvvu/meeru    maro    roddu    teesuko lee-ru*

You            another Road    take    NEG-2PL

(25') Team A are playing in a tournament/competition/championship. In order to advance... **Team A cannot lose to Team B.**

<i>Team A</i>	<i>meeda</i>	<i>Team B</i>	<i>odipo kuudadu</i>	//	<i>odipo-ledu</i>
Team A	PSP	Team B	defeat NEG	//	defeat-lightverb-MOD.NEG

## D. CIRCUMSTANTIAL

### D1 Circumstantial Necessity

(33) You are on a bus. You have not had a chance to go to the toilet for 4 hours, and your bladder is full. You text your friend... **I HAVE to pee** so badly!

<i>naaku</i>	<i>ottugaa</i>	<i>muutraaniki</i>	<i>po-vaali</i>
I-DAT	urgently	urine-DAT	go-MOD

(34) In the middle of a conversation, you feel a sneeze coming on... Excuse me! **I have to sneeze.**

<i>nenu</i>	<i>ippudu</i>	<i>tumm-aali.</i>
I-NOM	now	sneeze-MOD

(35') Water is entering a pipe, which has two outputs: the left output and the right output. But, you know that the left output is blocked. And the water is coming out from the right output. You say: now, **the water must come out from the right output [pipe].**

<i>niillu</i>	<i>tappakundaa</i>	<i>kudi</i>	<i>pipe</i>	<i>nund-e(nundi</i>	<i>'PSPi+e</i>	<i>'emphasis)</i>	<i>raa-vaali.</i>
Water	MOD	right	pipe	out.of-E			come-MOD

### D3 Circumstantial Possibility

(36) Ani came to visit a small island in the Philippines. She noticed that the climate and many of the plants are similar to some places she visited in Indonesia. The temperature is the same, the rainfall is the same, the types of rocks and the soil are the same. But when she looked around, she didn't find any *duku* trees anywhere. But because the temperature, rainfall, and soil are the same, she thinks that... **duku trees can grow here.**

<i>duku cetlu</i>	<i>ikkada kuuda</i>	<i>peraga-vaccu/galavu</i>
Duku tree	here also	grow-MOD

(37) Amy knows how to make traditional Italian pasta. Now Amy is back in the country she lives in, and she wants to make traditional pasta, but the right kind of ingredients are not sold where she lives. So, she is unhappy because she wanted to show her parents how to make traditional pasta... **Amy can make traditional Italian pasta** (but she does not have the ingredients).

<i>Amy</i>	<i>Traditional Italian pasta vanda-galadu/</i>	<i>ceya-galadu</i>	<i>/ceya-vaccu</i>
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Amy                      TIP                      cook-MOD/                      make-MOD                      /make-MOD

(38) Ben was in a motorbike accident 3 weeks ago, and he sprained his ankle. Ben is able to walk now. However, the doctor told Ben that he is not allowed to walk until 5 weeks after the accident... **Ben can walk now.**

*Ben ippudu nadava-galadu*

Ben now    walk-MOD

*Ben ippudu nadava-vaccu*

Ben now    walk-MOD

(39) Paul is quite old now, but he is still strong. His children are scared he will hurt his back if he does any intense labour, so they told him that he is forbidden to lift heavy things. But one day, his friend Rob asked to help him in the field, because Rob knows Paul is still strong. So when Rob saw a large rock that had to be moved, he asked P straightaway for help (but he didn't tell Paul's children!). Rob knew that... **Paul can lift that rock.**

*Paul    aa    konda ni    etta-[gala-du]*  
Paul    that    hill-ACC    lift-MOD-AGR

(39') Paul can't lift that rock.

*Paul    aa    konda ni    etta-[le-du]*

Comment: *ettu* is the root which means 'to lift'  
*ettu + a -> etta*

(40) The travel vans have a limit of 13 people by law. But the drivers don't care, and stop for more than 13 people. Also, the vans are bigger than you think... **The travel vans can fit 20 people.**

*The travel van-lu    20 mandi-ni    teesu-ko-po-[gala-vu]*  
The travel van-PL    20 Members-ACC    take-REFL-LiVb-[MOD-AGR]

#### D4. Circumstantial non-necessity

(44) Given the way this volcano has been active in the past 100 years, **it is LIKELY** (BUT NOT CERTAIN) **that the volcano will erupt** in the next 5 years.

*Volcano    raaboye 5 years-lo    pel-occu*  
Volcano    next    5 years-LOC    erupt-MOD

## D5. Circumstantial impossibility

(34') In the middle of a conversation, you feel a sneeze coming on... Excuse me! I can't stop sneezing!

(34'') Paul broke his leg. [He can't walk](#).

*aayana nadava-**ledu***

He walk-NEG.MOD

*\*aayana nadava-gala-**ledu***

(35') Water is entering a pipe, which has two outputs: the left output and the right output. But, you know that the left output is blocked. And the water is coming out from the right output. You say: the water CAN'T come out from the left output.

*niillu edama-vaipu nundi raa-**levu***  
water-PL left-side from come-NEG.MOD

## E. BOULETIC

### E1 Bouletic Necessity

(41) You love handbags. You see a really nice handbag in a window and you say... I WANT/NEED TO buy it.

*Naaku adi kaav-aali*

I.DAT that want-MOD

(42) Your friend asks you what you desire/want to do today since it is a holiday and you both are not required to do any tasks today. You say... I WANT to go to the cinema.

(43) A daughter tells her parent... My friend WANTS to come visit me.

### Table of Telugu Modals:

MODALS	EPISTEMIC	ROOT/NON-EPISTEMIC	
		PARTICIPANT-EXTERNAL	PARTICIPANT-INTERNAL

	<b>Epistemic</b>	<b>Deontic</b>	<b>Teleological</b>	<b>Circumstantial</b>	<b>Bouletic</b>
<b>Necessity</b>	V-aali <sup>S</sup>	V-aali <sup>S</sup>	V-aali <sup>S</sup>	V-aali <sup>S</sup>	V-aali <sup>S</sup>
<b>Weak Necessity</b>	V-aali <sup>S</sup>	V-aali <sup>S</sup>	V-aali <sup>S</sup>	--	...
<b>Possibility</b>	V-ccu <sup>S</sup>	V-ccu <sup>S</sup>	V-ccu <sup>S</sup>	V-ccu <sup>S</sup> , V-gala-AGR <sup>&lt;...&gt;</sup>	...
<b>Non necessity</b>	V-NEG-ccu <sup>S</sup>	[..., non-finite] + avasaram le-AGR (need NEG) <sup>PRP</sup>	[..., non-finite] + avasaram le-AGR ([...] + need NEG) <sup>PRP</sup>		
<b>Impossibility</b>		Negate non-modal clause with <i>le</i> -AGR <sup>AV</sup>  Negate non-modal clause with <i>kuuda</i> -AGR <sup>AV</sup>	Negate non-modal clause with <i>le</i> -AGR <sup>AV</sup>  Negate non-modal clause with <i>kuuda</i> -AGR <sup>AV</sup>	Negate non-modal clause with <i>le</i> -AGR <sup>AV</sup>	

\*tappakuNdaa appears to be adverbial, meaning “certainly.” When paired with a declarative clause it indicates epistemic necessity – “The cup is certainly on the table” == “The cup must be on the table,” but apparently not a true modal.

Deontic impossibility cases may not be declarative sentences and could also be negated imperatives. If they are negated declarative sentences (“Visitors are not to enter after 6pm,” e.g.), then the modal meaning is implicit rather than grammatical/lexical.

ADV: Adverbial. Does not appear to be a true modal.

S: Verbal suffix, not inflected for agreement and does not permit further agglutination.

AV: Likely auxiliary verbs, occurring in negative environments (*le* and *kuuda*). Agreement is compulsory like verbs (gender, person, number).

PRP: “not needed” paraphrase following a non-finite clause. The negation uses *le*, also found in impossibility contexts, but in this case is not internal to the modal meaning.

<...>: infix that permits further agglutination. Attested twice, both in circumstantial contexts. *Gala* is likely an ability modal. *Tun* is perhaps probability/likelihood.

AV and Infix cases may be the same category.

§ Epistemic Weak Necessity: there might be an issue here where Telugu only distinguishes between possibility and necessity – both types were included, as well as an adverbial *tappak\_Ndaa* + *V-ccu* form that would seem to translate as “it certainly should be raining in Goa right now.”

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