

Modal auxiliaries

- Modal auxiliaries can, could, should.... Are used **to express different degrees of likelihood** that something happens, they are also used to express **advice, ability, obligation, and prohibition**
- They are used **with another main verb**
- **Two modals cannot be used together** : example : I ~~can will~~ meet you
- They are followed by the **infinitive without « to »**

Modal auxiliary	Meaning/use	In the past
Can	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity • possibility 	could
Could	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity in the past • polite request • uncertainty 	Uncertainty in the past : could + have + past participle
• May • may/might	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permission • possibility/ uncertainty 	uncertainty in the past : might + have + past participle
Should/ ought to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advice • moral necessity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To criticise s.o. for not having done s.th: should + have + past participle • To criticise s.o for having done s.th but he shouldn't: shouldn't + have + past participle
Must	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obligation • deduction/ certitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obligation in the past : Had to • deduction in the past/certitude in the past : Must + have + past participle
Have to	obligation	Had to
Will	Certitude in the future	(conditional) would
couldn't/ can't	impossibility	Impossibility in the past : can't + have + past participle
would	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Past habit • polite request • assumption/ hypothesis (conditional) 	

Watch out :

« **must** » like « **have to** » expresses an **obligation**. However, « **mustn't** » expresses **prohibition** while « **not have to** » expresses **absence of necessity**.

Modal perfect :

modal auxiliary + have + past participle

Modal auxiliaries can be followed by perfect infinitive (have + past participle) to speculate about a situation in the past :

example :

He **must have done** something = we are sure he did something

He is so delighted, he **must have passed** his exam. = I'm sure he that he passed his exam.

Modal perfect is used **to criticise or comment past actions**.

Mary **should have worked** harder to succeed : in reality Mary **didn't work hard** enough

Jane **shouldn't have accused** him of murder without any evidence : but **she did accuse him**.