

- d) Past participle - **Trapped** inside the room, he shouted for help.

4.5 Auxiliary Verbs

Auxiliary verbs can be classified as **primary** auxiliaries and **modal** auxiliaries.

4.5.1 Primary Auxiliaries

There are three primary auxiliaries – **be**, **have** and **do**.

Characteristics of primary auxiliaries.

A. They can function as full verbs as well as helping verbs in a sentence.

- 1 a) Nirmala **is** a teacher.
b) Nirmala **is** teaching English now.
- 2.a) Varuni **has** two brothers.
b) Varuni **has** gone out.
- 3.a) He **does** his homework in the evenings.
b) Where **does** he live?

In each of these three pairs of sentences, the primary auxiliary verb in sentence (a) functions as a full verb and in sentence (b) as a helping verb.

B Like the lexical verbs the primary auxiliaries have five forms of the verb.

Base/Infinitive	Present	Present participle	Past	Past participle
Be am,	is,	being	was,	been
Have	are		were	
Do	has	having	had	had
	does	doing	did	done

4.5.1.1 Be as full verb (uses)

1. The **be** + infinitive construction

i) To give orders or instructions:

No one **is** to leave the premises until the police come.

He **is** to stay with us until his parents return.

ii) To convey a plan:

They **are** to go abroad next month.

Nalin and Shobini **are** to be married next month.

He **was** to go to Japan last week but his plans were changed at the last minute.

iii) This construction is very often used in news papers:

The president **is** to make an important statement tomorrow.

iv) **was/were** + infinitive can be used to express an idea of destiny:

They wished each other goodbye without realizing they **were** never to meet again.

v) **be** about + infinitive to express the immediate future:

They **are** about to start their journey.

2. **Be** is used to give information about a person or a thing:

Nimal **is** a doctor.

Silver **is** a precious metal.

Sri Lanka **is** an island.

The road **was** full of pot holes.

3. **Be can be** used to express mental or physical condition:
 She is very worried about her son.
 He will be miserable when he gets to know his advanced level results.
 I am ill.
4. **Be is** used to express age:
 How old are you? I am twelve years old.
5. To express height and weight.
 He is six feet tall.
 I am sixty kilos. / I weigh 60 kilos.
6. To express the value of something:
 This chain is worth eighty thousand rupees.
7. **Be is** used in sentences with introductory **it**.
 - i) In expressions of time, distance, weather, temperature etc.
 What time is it? It is seven o'clock.
 It is a lovely day today.
 It is Thursday.
 It is five kilometres from my house to my school.
 It is very warm today.
 - ii) It + be + noun/adjective + present participle + complement
 It + be + noun + to- infinitive
 It is fun playing cricket.
 It will be nice meeting the man of the match.
 It will be a pity to refuse that offer.
 - iii) In cleft sentences (to emphasize one part of the sentence)-
 refer to 20.6
 It was Rajah who broke the window.
 It is today that she is going.
 It was to Sumana that Ranjith gave a rose.
 - iv) It + be + adjective + to- infinitive/ that clause
 It is easy to criticize others.
 It is better to be early.
 It is strange that he has not returned yet.

Meera lives in Jaffna, **doesn't** she?
He won the first prize, **didn't** he?
She doesn't drink coffee, **does** she?

4.6 Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are used to indicate the possibility or necessity of an event, to make requests, offers, suggestions etc. They can also be used to make what you say more polite.

The following are the modal auxiliaries:

Present	Past
can	could
may	might
will	would
shall	should
must	had to
-	used to
ought to	-
need	-
dare	dared

4.6.1 Characteristics of Modal Verbs

1. There can be only one modal verb in a verb phrase.
2. If there is a modal verb in a verb phrase it will always be the first word. E.g. He **may** have gone out.
3. Some modals have tense – only the past tense as shown in the above table.
4. The tense of the modal determines the tense of the verb phrase.
E.g. He can walk fast. (present)
He could walk fast when he was young. (past)
5. The main function of the modal verb is to express modality. Modality means speaker's attitude to what he is saying:
That man is an engineer. (Speaker is definite about what he is saying.)

That man **may** be an engineer. (The fact that the speaker wants to state is the same but his attitude is different. Here 'may' means this is what I think but I am not sure. The modality here is possibility.)

6. Contracted forms - shall, will and would are contracted to 'll and 'd in spoken form especially after pronouns – He'll, we'd. But they are never contracted when they occur at the end of a sentence:

Rani said that she'd come and I hope she **will**.

7. If a modal is immediately followed by a main verb, the base form of the main verb is used.

E.g. He **will** go there tomorrow morning.

You **must** pay the fine within a week.

4.6.2 Uses of Modal Auxiliaries

1. Can

- a) To express ability (be able to, be capable of, know how to)

She **can** sing well but she cannot dance.

Supun **can** play the violin well.

'Can' can be replaced with be+ able to

She **is able to** type 70 words per minute.

- b) To ask for permission (**Can** is less formal than **may**)

Can I take short leave today?

Can I borrow your car?

- c) **Can** is used to say that someone is allowed to do something.

You **can** withdraw money at any branch of the Commercial Bank.

You **can** use my laptop.

- d) To express general possibility:

You **can** bathe there. (It is safe to bathe there)

You **can** swim across the Palk Strait when the sea is calm.

- e) To express theoretical possibility:

Anybody **can** make mistakes. (It is possible for anybody to make mistakes)

This building **can** be converted into a hospital. (It is possible to convert this building into a hospital.)

f) To express occasional possibility:

Measles **can** be quite dangerous. (Sometimes it is dangerous.)

The river **can** be very deep in some places. (It is possible for it to be deep in some places.)

2. Could/ was/were able to

a) To express past ability.

I **could** ride the bicycle very fast when I was a young boy.

I **could not** speak English two years ago but now I can.

- If we are referring to ability only, we can use **could/was able to** but if we want to say that someone had the ability to do something and did it we use only **was/were able to**. **Could** does not convey this meaning.

E.g. The boat capsized near the shore so the men **were able to** swim ashore. (could and did swim)

After treatment he **was able to** go home.

Finally, he **was able to** settle his debt.

He **could** run fast when he was young.

b) For present and future permission

Could I have a cup of tea? (present)

Could I go on the trip? (future)

c) To express present possibility in the present or future.

Don't eat that fruit. It **could** be poisonous. (present)

We **could** go for a swim since the weather is fine. (future)

d) To express ability in unreal conditions. (2nd Conditional) –

Refer to 18.5

If I were a bird, I **could** fly round the world.

If I had the money I **could** buy a luxury apartment.

e) **Could + have + past participle** is used to say that somebody had the ability to do something but did not do it.

You **could** have been a bit more kinder to that child.

You **could** have shared the cake with your brother.

- f) **Could + have + past participle** is used in the main clause in the 3rd conditional to say that there was a possibility to do something but it was not done. Refer to 18.5
If you had gone there in time, you **could** have met him. (There was a possibility of your meeting him but you missed it)
- g) **Could** is used to report structures which indicate ability.
Nathan: "I can speak French."
Nathan said he **could** speak French.

3. **May/Might** (When **may/might** is used with the same meaning, **may** is more formal than **might**.)

- a) For permission (**May** is more formal than **can**.)
May I use your umbrella?
May we go out, teacher?
Might we look around your house? (rarely used)
You **may** borrow my car.
- b) To express present or future possibility. Either **may** or **might** can be used, **might** slightly increases the doubt.
Pavithra **may** lend you the money. (Not very likely)
Pavithra **might** lend you the money. (Very unlikely)
The road **may/might** be flooded.
The budget **may/might** reduce the cost of living.
He **may/might** tell his mother about it.
- c) Prediction
It **may/might** rain in the evening.
He **may/might** get a distinction pass for English.
- d) **May/might** + perfect infinitive to speculate about past actions.
Father **may/might** have gone to office. (It is possible that he has gone)
Why did you do that? You **might/could** have been arrested for it. (But you didn't get arrested.)

*If something did not happen and you want to say that there was a possibility of it happening you have to use **might/could** and not **may**.

4. Will

- a) To express willingness
I **will** help you.
I **will** collect your child from school.
- b) To indicate intention
I **will** be meeting him when I go to Kandy.
I **will** buy a car soon.
- c) Prediction
The cost of living **will** increase after the budget.
The rain **will** cease soon.
- d) Polite request
Will you please open that window?
- e) Insistence
He **will** visit that girl, whatever you say. (He insists on doing it)
He **will** smoke ten cigarettes a day however much you advice him.
- f) To make an invitation – will you/won't you
Will you have dinner with us?
Won't you sit down, Mrs Kuruppu?

5. Would

- a) To express willingness
I **would** have another drink.
She **would** wash all the dishes.
- b) To describe a characteristic activity in the past.
My uncle **would** go for a long walk every morning.
He **would** get absent even for a slight reason.
- You may use 'used to' instead of 'would'.
My uncle **used to** go for a long walk every morning.
He **used to** get absent even for a slight reason.

- c) You use **would** in the main clause in the 2nd and 3rd conditional sentences.
If I went to France, I **would** learn French.
If you had asked me I **would** have helped you.

- d) **Would** is used in reported clauses.
He said that he **would** lend me the money.
She threatened that she **would** report the matter to the principal.

- e) **Would** is used to make requests/ give orders.
Would you help me to lift this table?
Would you leave me now?

- f) **Would** is used to offer something to someone or make an invitation.

Would you like a cup of tea?

Would you care to join us on the trip?

6. Shall

- a) Suggestion

Shall we go to the canteen for a cup of tea?

Shall we talk about it later?

- b) Asking for advice

What **shall** I cook for lunch?

Where **shall** we spend our vacation?

- c) Offering

Shall I pour you a cup of tea?

Shall I switch on the fan?

- d) Intention

I **shall** speak to him tomorrow.

I **shall** buy that book.

- e) Insistence

He **shall** be punished for this.

You **shall** visit your grandmother tomorrow.

- f) To express a command (Formal)
Members of the club **shall** enter the names of their guests in the register provided.
Pedestrians **shall** use the pedestrian crossing to cross the road.
(In less formal English **must/are to** would be used instead of **shall** in the above sentences.)

7. Should

a) Necessity

You **should** listen to your parents.
You **should** read widely in English.

b) Obligation

You **should** finish your work by five.
You **should** bring your English books to class.

c) **that.....should** construction is used after verbs which advise, agree, arrange, ask, beg, command, decide, demand, determine, insist, order, proposed, recommend, request, stipulate, suggest, urge etc.

She advised us **that** we **should** invest the money on a house.
They decided/agreed **that** they **should** renovate the house.
She was determined **that** her son **should** become a doctor.
He proposed/suggested **that** we **should** complete the project within a month.

d) After **can't think why/ don't know why/ see no reason why/can't understand why/ don't understand why** etc when the speaker is not sure the assumption was reasonable.

e) **I don't know why** you **should** think that he stole the money. **I see no reason why** you **should** interfere in their affairs. **I can't understand why** he **should** think that I let him down.

8. Ought to

Ought to and **should** are sometimes used with similar meanings.

- a) To say that you expect something to happen.
We **should/ought to** be in Galle by four o'clock.
He is working very hard for the examination. He **ought to/should** get through the exam with several distinctions.
- b) We use **should/ought to** to say that something is morally right.
Corrupt parliamentarians **ought to/should** be punished.
We **ought to/should** inform the police about this.
- c) We use **ought to/should** to give advice to someone.
You **ought to/should** phone your mother at least once a week.
I think you **ought to/should** discuss this with your lawyer.
- d) To express obligation/duty
You **should/ought to** look after your parents when they are old.
You **should/ought to** prepare your lessons well before you walk into the class.
- e) **Ought to/should** is used with the continuous infinitive to express the idea that the subject is neglecting his duty.
He **ought to/should** be studying for his exam without loafing with his friends.

You **ought not to/shouldn't** be driving so fast.

Ought to/Should is used with the perfect infinitive to express an unfulfilled obligation or an action that was neglected.

You **ought to/should** have told him about risks involved in investing his money on that venture.

He **should/ought to** have treated his wife better.

Must

The expressions **have to**, **have got to** and **need to** can be sometimes used with the same meaning as **must**.

To express necessity in the present.

- I **must** leave very soon.
 You **have to** meet him before Saturday.
 We **need to** discuss this in detail.
- If you want to say that someone is required to do something regularly, particularly because it is part of their job, you use **have to**. You cannot use **must**.
 Manel **has to** do all the housework while her sister studies for an exam.
 We **have to** write a report at the end of every month.
 - If you want to say that someone is required to do something on a particular occasion, you use **have got to**.
 You've **got to** report to the head office next Thursday.
 We've **got to** get in touch with that company before tomorrow.
 - If you want to say that something was necessary in the past, you use **had to** and not **must**.
 We **had to** observe two minutes silence.
 I **had to** assume duties last week.
 - b) In formal English **must** is used to say that someone is required to do something according to a rule or law.
 You **must** pay your school fees before the end of this week.
 All pedestrians **must** cross the road at the pedestrian crossing.
 - c) To express necessity in the future you use **will have to**.
 You **will have to** contact the Human Resources Department for this.
 We **will have to** admit him to hospital soon.
 - d) To express negative necessity.
 He **must not/mustn't** take up that job. It is too risky.
 You **don't have to** do this if you are too busy.
 You **needn't** go in to all the details if you don't have the time.
 You **don't need to** contribute any money towards this.
 - e) You use **must** to express a strong belief.
 Oh, you **must be** Rani's husband.

- **Have to** and **have got to** can also be used in this way, but not when the subject is 'you'.
Money **has got to** be the reason for his downfall.
This **has to** be the proof.
- You can use **must + be + ing** form of the verb to say that you believe something is happening.
Gamini **must be telling** lies.
You **must be getting** old. You are so forgetful.

10. Used to

- To say that something happened regularly in the past.
 - To contrast a past habit with the present.
My uncle **used to** drink a lot when he was young. Now he doesn't.
 - To express a past habit
I **used to** go for long walks two years ago.
- Be + used to is used to say that someone is familiar with something or has become accustomed to something.
I **am used to** noise. It doesn't bother me.
He **is used to** smoking twenty cigarettes a day.

11. Dare

Dare is used in the negative and interrogative as a modal verb.

I **dare not/ daren't** meet him again.

Dare she talk to me like that?

12. Need

Need is also used in the negative or interrogative as a modal verb.

You **need not/needn't** come to school next week.

We **need not/needn't** waste our time over this.

Need you make so much of noise?

Need she go there so often?