

MENG321: Modals and Its Uses

Intent/Meaning	Modal/Semi-Modal	Sentence Examples
Emphasis	do/does/did	Actually I do know that, but thanks!
Ability	can be able to/am able to/are able to/is able to/was able to/were able to/could	I can read pretty fast. She was not able to catch her plane. Could you finish the test yesterday?
Permission	can may could might	Can I leave now? May I come in? Could you close the window? Might I join you?
Prohibition	cannot/can't must not/mustn't may not	You cannot walk on the grass. He must not fight with his sister. You may not smoke in this room.
Obligation / Order	must have to/have got to will shall	We must stay here. You have to go now. You will stop now! I shall work harder next time.
Duty / Advice	should ought to must	He should listen more carefully. You ought to go to bed earlier. You must see this movie!
Necessity	must have to/has to/had to/ need to/needs to	He must stop complaining. I have to catch my train at 8 am. I need to pay the rent every month.

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Absence of necessity	do not have to/don't have to/does not have to/doesn't have to/did not have to/didn't have to/need not/needn't/do not need to/don't need to/does not need to/doesn't need to/did not need to/didn't need to	You don't have to come if you are busy. You needn't worry, he will be fine.
Commitment	will/'ll shall/'ll	I'll never lie to her again. I shall honor this promise.
Request / Invitation	shall will would	Shall we dance? Will you come to the party tonight? Would you please help me?
Impossibility	cannot/can't could not/couldn't will not/won't would not/wouldn't	This can't be right. He couldn't stop crying. Money won't help now! I told you it wouldn't work.
Certainty	will/'ll	That'll be Bob ringing the doorbell.
Probability	should must cannot/can't	She should be home by now. They must be very proud. He can't be more than thirty.

Intent/Meaning	Modal/Semi-Modal	Sentence Examples
Possibility	could may might	He could be home already. It may or may not rain for the picnic. This might be the answer to my problem.
Habit	used to would	I used to play in this park when I was little. For years, she would visit her friends every Sunday.
Dare	dare/do not dare/don't dare/does not dare/doesn't dare/did not dare/didn't dare	How dare you call me selfish? I don't dare look down from the top.