

MODAL AUXILIARIES

A modal verb expresses different modes of telling or asking something to someone.

MODALS	USES	PRESENT	FUTURE	PAST
Can Be able to	ability/possibility informal permission	I can run fast. Hey, can I use the car?	I will be able to go. I won't be able to go.	I could run when I was a kid. I was able to play with my brother
Could	ability in the past polite permissions requests suggestions	Could I take your pen? If you want, I could fix your car.		I could study last night. I could not study because of the noise..
May Might	polite request. formal permission. less than 50% possibility.	May I go to the bathroom? Yes, you may go. He may be at home. She might be sick.		• John may have been at home. • She might have been sick.
Must	Strong necessity. obligation. prohibition. 95% certainty.	She must study. You must pay the bill. You must not smoke here. She didn't come. She must be sick.		She didn't come. She must have been sick.
Have to Have got to	obligation necessity	I have to go to class. I have got to have my medicine.		I had to go to class. I had got to have my medicine.
Should	advisability. 90% certainty	You look sick, you should go to the doctor. Mark is a good student ; he should do a good exam.		• You looked sick; you should have gone to the doctor. • She is very smart. She should have done a good exam.
Ought to	Similar to Should but more formal. advisability. 90% certainty	I Ought to study for the exam. He is a good student ; he should do a good exam.		She ought to have studied for the exam.
Shall	polite question to make a suggestion. formal future only with I and we	Shall we open the window? What dress shall I wear for the party?	You should / could / must wear the red one	

Going to	Definite future plan. 100% certainty.		I am going to paint my room. It is going to rain.	I was going to paint my room, but I couldn't.
Had better	Advisability with treat of bad results or consequences.	You had better come to class, or you will fail the semester.	He will be here at 5 p.m. for sure. You are so busy. I will help you. Will you open the window, please?	
Would	Conditional Polite: requests, invitation, permission	I would go if you invited me. could you please give me that? Would you like a cup of tea?	She had better eat or she may get sick. we had better go home early or we may/ might /will/ would be in danger	

Text with modal verbs

The Story of Helen Keller, The Girl Who Could Not See, Hear or Speak



I'd like you to know the story of Helen Keller, who could neither see nor hear from the time she was a baby. Yet the brilliant girl was able to overcome all those handicaps, to graduate from a college with honors and become a useful citizen.

I must say there was nothing wrong with Helen Keller when she was born. Her father and mother were very proud of their pretty baby, who tried to say "pa-pa" and "ma-ma". For nineteen months Helen grew bigger and stronger. She was able to walk when she was a year old; she could say a few words.

But one day the child fell ill. She must have been very ill. For days she was laid up with a high fever and soon the parents learned that their darling would never be able to see and hear. The little child was now doomed to a life of silence and darkness. She could not hear what was said to her and did not know how to talk, she was unable to play with other children.

When Helen was 6 years old her parents took her to Baltimore and then to Washington to famous doctors to find out if they could do something to make her hear and see again, but the doctors could do nothing. The child was hopelessly deaf. Dr. Bell said the Kellers should address the Perkins Institution for the blind in Boston and ask if they could send someone to help the child.

It was a wonderful day for Helen Keller when Ann Sullivan arrived in March 1887 to take charge of the child who could neither hear nor speak. Helen was nearly seven, Ann Sullivan was past twenty.

Ann Sullivan found a way to make herself understood. She gave the child a doll, and taking Helen Keller's hand she slowly spelled out "d-o-l". The child learnt for the first time that things must have names. When Miss Sullivan later spelled into the little girl's hand the word "w-a-t-e-r" and then let the water from the pumps run over her hand, a new light seemed to brighten the face of the child. During the next 3 months, she learned 300 words and could even put some of them into sentences.

Miss Sullivan loved her pupil who was so quick to learn. She lived with Helen, played with her and worked with her every hour of the day. By means of the hand language, Helen and her teacher were able to talk to each other. Helen learned to read books that were printed for the blind with raised letters. She also learned to use the typewriter to write what she wanted to say. When Helen was 10 she was determined that she would learn to speak. At first she learned only the sounds of the letters of the alphabet, but soon she was able to say words and sentences.

In the story of her life Helen Keller writes, "I shall never forget the surprise and delight I felt when I uttered my first connected sentence: "It is warm." At first she had much difficulty with her speech, but Ann Sullivan understood what Helen trying to say. Helen practiced speaking day after day until at last she developed a clear voice.

Later she was able to speak before large crowds which came to hear her whenever she lectured. At the age of 20 Helen Keller passed all the difficult entrance examinations to Radcliffe College. Helen did extremely well in her classes and was able to keep up with the other students. Helen wrote "The Story of My Life" while she was in college. In her writings and lectures Helen did everything she could to help and encourage others who were blind.
From "Short Stories of Famous Women")