

May

Affirmative form

May comes first in the verb phrase (after the subject and before another verb):

❖ It may be possible for him to get home tonight.

May can't be used with another modal verb:

❖ This may hurt you.

Not: This may could hurt you. or This could may hurt you.

May

Negative form

The negative form of may is may not. We don't use don't/doesn't/didn't with may:

❖ We may not have enough information at the moment.

Not: We don't may have enough information at the moment.

May (uses)

Permission

We use *may* to ask for, give and refuse permission. It is quite formal.

❖ *May I leave the room?*

Yes, you may/No, you may not.

May

Possibility

We use may to refer to weak possibility in the present and future:

- ❖ The economy may go up or down in the next year. (I think both are possible, the economy going up or the economy going down. I am not making either one a strong possibility.)
- ❖ I think I may go to the doctor today and try to get some antibiotics. (I am not very sure yet if I will go to the doctor.)

Might

Affirmative form

May comes first in the verb phrase (after the subject and before another verb):

- ❖ She might sell her house.
- ❖ This might be true

Negative form

The negative form of *might* is *might not* or *mightn't*. We don't use *don't/doesn't/didn't* with *might*.

- ❖ *There might not be anyone in the house. (or There mightn't be ...)*

Might (uses)

Possibility

We use might most often to refer to weak possibility:

- ❖ I might go to Japan for a month to study Japanese.

Permission

We use might to refer to permission. It is very formal and is not used very often:

- ❖ Might I ask your name?
- ❖ Might I interrupt you for a moment?

Predictions

We use WILL/WON'T when we are confident about a prediction. We can also add adverbs such as certainly, definitely, probably etc.

We use may (not) or might (not) when we are less confident about a prediction. There is no difference in meaning between may and might, but may is more common in formal/written English.