Modal Auxiliaries

Modal verbs are a kind of auxiliary verb. They facilitate the main verb for suggesting potential, expectation, permission, ability, possibility, and obligation. When used with the main verb, modal verbs do not end with *-s* for the third-person singular. Modal auxiliary verbs never change form, but they have a different form for past tense.

The modal auxiliaries include:

Present Tense	Past Tense
Will **Can** **Must** (have to) **May** **Should** (ought to) (had better)	**Would** (used to) **Could** (Had to) **Might** **Should** (ought to)

NB: The words in parentheses ( ) are semi-modals. They have the same meaning, but they are different grammatically.

Will – Would
Will indicates a 'willingness' to do something in the future. The negative form of ***will*** – ***will not (won't)*** indicates an 'unwillingness' (refusal, reluctance) to do something.

Example:
o   I will give you another opportunity.
o   I will play tomorrow.
o   They will arrive at 10 AM.
o   She won't come today.

Would indicates *general* or *repeated* willingness in the past. It also indicates preference in the present.

Example:
o   If you did not leave, I would still be taking care of you.
o   Whenever I had to go there, they would throw a party.
o   We thought that people would buy this book.
o   If I were you, I would not do it.
o   I would like to make a toast.

Used to sometimes replaces ***would*** but sometimes it would be grammatically incorrect if we use *used to* in place of ***would***.

Example:

- When I was in school, I used to make sketches.
- He often used to cry at night without reason.
- I used to take a break at this time of the year.

Can – Could – May – Might

These modals express possibility and ability.

Can indicates ability. ***Could*** indicates ability with an option.

Example:
- I can do it. (The subject 'I' is sure about his/her ability)
- I could do it. (The subject 'I' is not sure about his/her ability)
- They cannot do it. (present)
- They could not do it. (past)

Can & ***could*** also indicate possibility.

Example:
- The temperature can rise this month.
- They can't go too far by now.
- It could rain later.

May and ***might*** both indicate possibility but ***might*** can suggest that there is less possibility than ***may***.

Example:
- It may rain later.
- It might rain later.
- They may come back.
- They might come back.

Must
Must indicates necessity.

Example:
- I must leave now.
- He must study hard.
- Alex must go home by 6.00 pm.

Have to has the similar meaning to ***must*** but implies less urgency.

Example:
- I have to leave now.
- He has to study hard.
- Alex has to go by 6.00 pm.
- I had to leave then. (past)
- He had to study hard to pass the exam. (past)

Should

Should indicates obligation and probability.

Example:
o You should come home early.
o You should not smoke at all.
o I should visit my parents more often.
o There should be an extra key for the lock in the drawer. (probability)
o He should have reached by now. (probability)
o I should have done that. (obligation in the past)

Ought to and **had better** sometimes replaces **should**.

Example:
o You ought to come home early.
o We ought to have taken a taxi. (Past)
o We had better leave. (*Had better* is generally used in spoken English.)
o I think parents ought to give children more freedom. (*Had better* won't be appropriate here.