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In this chapter, you will:

* Learn about types of modal verbs used in English Language
* Learn how to use and apply Modal Verbs in academic texts

One of the most useful resources used in sentences and expressions in English is the system of modal verbs. Modals are a special types of verbs; they are followed by the base form of verbs. Modals are considered as helping verbs which help add more meaning to the verbs that follow them.

The purpose or function of using modal verbs in a sentence includes to show ability, to ask and give permission, to show probability and to make suggestion and obligation.

1. **To show ability**
2. We use can and can't to talk about someone's skill or general abilities:

Example of sentence:

* She can speak several languages.
* He can swim like a fish.
* They can't dance very well.

1. We use can and can't to talk about the ability to do something at a specific time in the present or future:

Example of sentence:

* I can see you.
* Help! I can't breathe.

1. **To ask and give permission**
2. We use can to ask for permission to do something:

Example of sentence:

* Can I ask a question, please?
* Can we go home now?

1. Could is more formal and polite than can:

Example of sentence:

* Could I ask a question, please?
* Could we go home now?

1. May is another more formal and polite way of asking for permission.

Example of sentence:

* + May I ask a question, please?
  + May we go home now?

1. **To show probability**
2. We use may, might and could to say that something is possible, but not certain.

Example of sentence:

* They may come by car. (= Maybe they will come by car.)
* They might be at home. (= Maybe they are at home.)
* If we don't hurry, we could be late. (= Maybe we will be late.)

1. We use can to make general statements about what is possible.

* It can be very cold here in winter. (= It is sometimes very cold here in winter.)
* You can easily get lost in this town. (= People often get lost in this town.)

1. **To make suggestion and obligation**
2. We use should and shouldn't to make suggestions and give advice.

Example of sentence:

* You should send an email.
* You shouldn’t go by train.

1. We also use could to make positive suggestions.

Example of sentence:

* We could meet at the weekend.
* You could eat out tonight.

1. We use must and mustn't to say that it is necessary (or not) to do something.

Example of sentence:

* You must stop at a red light.
* Everyone must bring something to eat.
* You can wear what you like, but you must look neat and tidy.
* I’m sorry, but you mustn't make a noise in here.

Other example of sentences:

* Smoking **can** lead to serious illness such as cancer or lung disease.
* The researcher could accept quantum theory as one complete theory.
* Less severe allergic reaction **may** occur and this includes rashes and upset stomach.
* The person responsible has provided an extensive list of items which **may** be used.
* Social care services **can** play a significant role to help in coping with social problems.
* There is a possibility that the machine **might** not work properly.
* Judges **should** not assume that juries will understand the reasons for giving shorter prison sentences.

There are also other functions of why modal verbs are used in English sentences and these include providing opinon and explanation as well as showing arguments. Modal verbs used for these purposes are **may, must & can**.

Example of usage:

Current research suggest woman have less resistance to the most dangerous kinds of lung cancer. This **may** be due to changing patterns of smoking behavior-many women took up the habit a decade after men, who smoked heavily during Second World War.

Women **may** also smoke in different way compared to men, for example taking shorter, sharper inhalations, which **can** have effect of the kind and severity of the cancer that they develop.

**Using Modal Verbs with Adverbs**

If one of the key jobs of adverbs is to add to the meaning of verbs, it makes sense that modal adverbs add additional meaning to modal verbs. Remember that modality has to do with ideas such as the possibility of something happening. Another way to think of this concept is to ask yourself: ''How likely is this to occur or to exist?''

Let’s look at few example of sentences:

* I really might be going to the party on Saturday.
* Surely you can't mean to vote for that candidate!
* It is likely that Matt will get an A in Chemistry.
* That controversial amendment surely won't pass. Undoubtedly, the huge number of protests have had an effect on support for the amendment.

**Practice 1: Choose the correct answer.**

Choosing to go to a gym regularly (1) can change your life for the better. Don’t let it be a decision that you regret. Good gyms have a lot to offer. They (2) can provide exercise equipment that is just too expensive and their staff are made to provide quality health and fitness advice. If you are planning to join a gym, you (3) should definitely ask to look around before you become a member.

There are plenty of things to bear in mind before choosing which gym to join. Before the law changed a few years ago, anyone (4) can set up a gym and even now gyms are not allowed to employ other that trained fitness instructor.

You (5) should not be put off by the by the gym’s hard sell. Just because they want you to sign up, they want your money-that does not mean you (6) should decide there and then. It is important to go to few gyms first before you make your final decision.

Ask yourself: What kind of equipment and facilities that they have? There is little point joining a gym and then thinking a few months later, I (7) could have chosen a gym with a pool.

1. A. must B. should C. would D. will
2. A. can B. could C. would D. must
3. A. should B. would C. might D. will
4. A. can B. could C. might D. may
5. A. must not B. could not C. might not D. may not
6. A. cannot B. can C. would D. must
7. A. should B. must C. may D. will

can could definitely may might must never should sometimes will

Practice 2: Choose the words from the box that match each sentence.

1. I must study on the weekend because I have a test on Monday.
2. You should brush your teeth every day.
3. May I please borrow your pen?
4. I will see you next week.
5. I might finish the painting tomorrow but I need to buy some more paint first.
6. My friends come to my house sometimes.
7. I definitely like the new clothes that you bought.
8. I can wait until you have finished before we go home.
9. Never do that! It is too dangerous!
10. I could come to your party but I need to check the date first