**Auxiliary Verbs "Can/Could" and "May/Might/Must"**

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| **Can**  Used to express ability (to be able to do something):   * I can make jewelry. * He can’t speak French. * Can you open this jar?   Used to ask for permission:   * Can I use your bathroom? * Can I leave now? * Can I raise the volume?   Used to make requests or suggestions:   * Can I have more napkins? * Can I have the bill? * You can take this spot if you like. * You can do whatever you want.   **Could (past form of can)**  Describes an ability that someone had in the past:   * I could swim when I was young. * You could see the boat sinking. * They could tell he was nervous.   Often used in auxiliary functions to express permission politely:   * Could I take this jacket with me? * You could borrow my umbrella. * Could you please let me pass you? * Could I get you more water?   Used to express possibility:   * All of them could ride in the van. * You could always stay at our house. * Could it be true? * This plan could really work out.   **May**  Used to ask for formal permission:   * May I come in? * May I say something now? * May I ask one question?   Used to suggest something that is possible:   * She may agree with this plan. * They may not be happy about what happened. * It may shower tonight.   **Might (past form of may)**  Used to suggest a smaller possibility than may does (actually, might is more common than may in American English):   * He might have finished it. * I might go see a doctor. * I might not come this time. * It might be right. * You might have lost it. * The store might have been closed today.   **Must**  Used to express something formally required or necessary:   * I must complete the project by this week. * The government must provide health care for everybody. * Everyone must save the natural resources of the earth. * The building must have a fire alarm. * You must answer my question right now.   Used to show that something is very likely:   * He must be a genius. * You must be joking! * There must be an accident. * She must be very tired.   **[Quiz 21.1]**  Choose the right word for each blank.  1)She                      (can, could, may, might, must) have practiced a lot. Her performance was amazing. 2)I can’t find my watch anywhere. I                      (can, could, may, might, must) have lost it. 3)Professor,                      (can, could, may, might, must) I ask a question? 4)                     (can, could, may, might, must) you please lower your voice? 5)You                      (can, could, may, might, must) be kidding! How is that possible? 6)I                      (can, could, may, might, must) speak both English and Chinese fluently.  [**View Answers**](javascript:showHide('div1'))  [21.1] 1) must 2) might 3) may 4) could 5) must 6) can |