



Modals

Modal verbs are also known as modals and are used to give additional information about the main verb. Let us learn more about them.

What Are 'Modals'?

'Modals' (also called **modal verbs** or **modal auxiliary verbs**) are special verbs that follow the main verb and modify its meaning and function in a sentence. Modals serve a wide variety of **communicative** functions, such as expressing probability, ability, obligation, willingness, and habits, as well as giving advice and permission.

Modal Verbs in English

The following is a list of **modal verbs** in English:

1. Can
2. Could
3. Shall
4. Should
5. Will
6. Would
7. May
8. Might
9. Must

It's important to note that modal verbs do not have a tense division like regular verbs. This means that some modal verbs can be used in **both** past and present forms.

General Rules of Modal Verbs

Conjugation

Modal verbs only have **one form**, which is the **base form** of the verb, and they do not change to indicate tense, aspect, or agreement with the subject. This means that modal verbs are not affected by the rules of adding -s, -ing, or -ed, which are used for conjugating main verbs in English. Pay attention to the examples:

Nikolai **must have been** here. (Not 'Nikolai ~~musted~~ be here.')

I **will swim** in this pool. (Not 'I ~~willing~~ swim in this pool.')

She **shall ride** at dawn. (Not 'She ~~shalls~~ ride at dawn.')



I will swim in this pool.

using the modal 'will' in a sentence

Can They Stand Alone?

Modal verbs do not function as the main verb of a sentence, and they require another verb to complete the meaning of a sentence. The rule for using modal verbs is to add the **base form** of the main verb after the modal verb to create a complete verb phrase. For example:

I might walk to my house, if it doesn't rain.

* Without the main verb the sentence doesn't make sense: 'I might to my house, if doesn't rain'.

I can drive trucks and it is fun.

She **would like** to drink a cup of coffee.

You **should wash** your hands every time you enter the house.

Negation

To create the **negative form** of a modal verb, you can simply add '**not**' after the modal verb.

Alina **cannot** get out of her room.

If I were you I **wouldn't** marry Damon.

You **must not** smoke here, look at the no-smoking sign!

Tip!

Sometimes contracting negative modal verbs leads to a change in the overall appearance of the verb. For example:

He **won't** travel to Italy.

* Here in this example, 'won't' is the contracted form of 'will not'.

The modal verb 'can', has two negative forms, one is **can not** and the other is **cannot** which is used as a single term in *formal* writings. However, the *only* correct contracted form is **can't**.

David **can't** pay the rent.

My sisters **can not** get along with each other.

Researchers must do more to ensure that human cells **cannot** be taken without consent.

However, the use of **shan't**, which is the contracted form of 'shall not' is not common in informal and daily spoken English.

I **shan't** drink alcohol at all.

Forming Questions

When forming a question using a modal verb, the modal verb is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

In wh- questions, an interrogative word such as 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why', 'who', or 'how' is placed at the beginning of the sentence followed by the modal verb and the subject. Pay attention to the examples:

Should I accept his proposal?

May I go out?

When will you arrive to the station?

What would you do, if you were me?

Forming Tag Questions

Modal verbs can also appear in tag questions. Tag questions using modal verbs are formed without the main verb being expressed, such as "Can he?" or "Would they?"

In general, if the main sentence is affirmative, the modal in the tag question must be negative, and if the main sentence is negative, the tag question must be affirmative. Take a look at the examples:

He can speak Italian, **can't he?**

* Not 'He can speak Italian, **can he?**'

They wouldn't follow us, **would they?**

You cannot be more patient, **can you?**

I shouldn't call him, **should I?**

Punctuation in Tag Questions

There must be a **comma** before tag questions.

You won't ever leave me, will you?

Jake should start practicing for the big match, shouldn't he?

Are Modal Verbs Different from Auxiliary Verbs?

Modals are a **special kind** of auxiliary verbs. That is why they are also called **modal auxiliary verbs**.

	modal verbs	auxiliary verbs
can indicate <u>tense/voice</u>	✗	✓
can be conjugated	✗	✓
can be <u>inverted/negative</u>	✓	✓
can be used more than once	✗	✓

For example:

It **will have been** made.

* 'Will' and 'have' are auxiliary verbs. So it is possible to have more than one auxiliary verb in a sentence.

When a sentence contains both auxiliary verbs and modal verbs, the **modal** is used for negation and interrogation. Look:

I **will be** walking there. → **Will** you be walking there?

She **should not** have done that.

Review

Modal verbs precede the main verb to give more information about the function of a verb. These verbs are used to express *probability, possibility, ability, obligation, advice, permission, prohibition, lack of necessity, habits* by using the following words as modal verbs:

- can
- could
- may
- might
- must
- will
- would
- shall
- should

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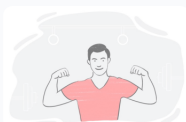
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Can and Could



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