

WEEK 5

Modal Verbs

- # A modal verb is a class of verbs that is used to indicate modality that is : likelihood , ability , permission , request , capacity , suggestions , orders , obligation , or advice .
- # Modal verbs always accompany the base (infinitive) form of another verb having semantic content . A modal verb gives information about the function of the main verb that it governs .
- # Modals have a wide variety of communicative functions such as
- # Examples : can , could , shall , should , may , might , will , would , must , ought to , etc .
- # They have some characteristics in common :
 - they have no infinitive marker
 - to form the question , you invert the subject & the verb?
Eg: Can you play the guitar ?
 - to form a negative , you add not :
Eg: You mustn't (must not) forget your homework .

- they are followed by the verb without to
- they contract to these forms :
can't, couldn't, shan't, shouldn't, won't,
wouldn't, mustn't, needn't.
- The other contractions like 'mightn't' or 'oughtn't to'
are rare.
- We do not contract may not.

Shall / Shant

- Shall / shant are modal verbs and are only used with I and we. They can be used in a lot of different ways. The most important are :
- to make and ask for suggestions :
Eg: 1. Shall we go and see a film?
2. What shall we say to him?
- to offer to do something :
Eg: Shall I do the washing up?
- to ask somebody what they want you to do :
Eg: Where shall I put your bag?

NOTE: In spoken English, I will, I shall, we will, we shall, he will, they will, etc. are usually contracted to I'll, we'll, he'll, they'll, etc.

Might

- Might + verb
- This is used to talk about a future action which we are not sure about:
 - It might rain. (= it is possible that it will rain)
 - I might go.

Can

- Can is used:
 - to talk about ability:
Eg: 1. He can swim
2. He can't play tennis
 - to request something:
Eg: 1. Can I speak to Mark please?
2. Can you repeat that?
3. Can I smoke?
 - in the negative we use can't to say something is logically impossible:
Eg: 1. It can't be true.
2. He can't be married - he lives on his own.

Could

- Could is used:
 - to talk about ability in the past:
Eg. I could swim when I was six.
 - to make suggestions:
Eg. We could go to the beach.
 - to ask somebody to do something:
Eg. Could you tell me the time?
 - to ask for permission:
Eg. Could I leave the room?
 - to talk about a possibility in the present:
Eg. He could be French.

May

- May is used:
 - to ask for permission formally:
Eg. May I talk to you a second?
 - to talk about things in the future which are not certain
Eg. The weather may be lovely tomorrow.

Should

• Should is used :

→ to ask for and give advice :

Eg. 1. What ~~you~~ should you do if you get sunburn?
2. You ~~should~~ put cream on your skin.

→ to make suggestions :

Eg: 1. I think we should go home.

Will

• Will is used :

→ for talking about future .

→ to make offers :

Eg: I'll do it for you.

→ to make promises :

Eg: I'll do it as soon as I can.

→ Would is used to make conditional sentences in the phrase :

Eg: Would you like ... ?

Ought to

- Ought to , this is used in the same way as should so the negative you usually say shouldn't , not oughtn't to.

Need

- This is usually a 'normal' verb , which forms its negatives and questions in the usual way :

Eg: 1) → Do you need anything ?

2) → I don't need to do anything .

→ But the negative form needn't is very common:

Eg : We needn't go immediately .

Must

- Must is used :

→ to express an obligation or give an order :

Eg : 1. You must go to bed early .

2. You must stop doing that

3. We must be more careful in future .

→ to give advice :

Eg : 1. If you go to Britain, you must try fish and chips .

- Mustn't is used:

→ to express a prohibition.

Eg: You mustn't go swimming after lunch.

Have to

- Have to is used in place of must to express an ex obligation:

Eg → New students have to/must register on their first day.

- It is also used in the past or future because must is not possible:

Eg - 1. We all had to give in our names.

2. You will have to be brave.

- Have (got) to:

→ This is used in the same way as have to. The negative is haven't got to and the question form is:

Eg → 1. Have you got to...?

2. I've got to go to the bank.

3. We haven't got to be there until 12 o'clock.

4. Have you got to change money?

- This form is more colloquial than have to and is commonly used when the obligation is at the moment of speaking.

→ Don't / doesn't have to

- This is used show that something is not necessary or not obligatory.

Eg - British men don't have to do military service.

→ Must or have to?

- Generally speaking, these two forms have a similar meaning, but are used in different ways.

Must is used when the person who is speaking is making the obligation:

Eg : 'You must do your homework' said the teacher.

- Have to is used when an organization like a school or a government imposes the obligation :

Eg : 1. You have to have a visa to visit the USA.
2. In that school they have to do a lot of homework.

→ Mustn't or don't / doesn't have to?

- These two forms mean different things. Mustn't shows an obligation, but an obligation not to do something. It is like can't.

Eg : You mustn't smoke in here.

(= You can't smoke in here)

- Don't have to is used when there is no obligation at all - you can do what you like. It is like needn't or don't need to.

Eg: You don't have to come.

(= You don't need to come)

USEFUL PHRASES WHICH ARE LIKE MODAL VERBS

- Be able to :
 - This is used in the same way as 'can' but only in the sense of ability :
Eg - He is able to walk now.
- Be allowed to :
 - This is used in place of can or could to talk about permission :
Eg - 1. Are we allowed to smoke.
2. We weren't allowed to go out after nine at night.
- Used to + verb :
 - This is used to talk about states, situations, or repeated actions (habits & routines) that you did in the past but don't do now:
- Repeated Actions
 - Eg. She used to play tennis every week, but now she plays football.

- States :

Eg. I used to be very fat, but I've lost a lot of weight.

- Situations :

Eg. I used to live in Brazil.

→ You cannot use this form in present.

NOTE : Don't confuse this verb with the adjective used to + noun / ...ing which means 'accustomed to' or 'familiar with'.

Mood & Modal Verbs

Some Examples :

- can I tell you something?
- What can I do for you?
- I can play piano.
- I would love to hear from you.
- They may go to Canada next year.
- She might like these dresses.
- You can't be serious.
- We must study.
- We should listen to others.

MODALITY & MOODS

- Modality is about non-factual things in the sense that modal utterances are not an emphasis on being factual.
- Modality involves comments from speaker on necessity or possibility.
- Auxiliaries are one way of expressing modality.
- Mood is grammatical coding of modality in verb inflections.
 - Imperative : Help me with these issues.

→ Subjunctive / optative : May you live long !

ADVERBS & MODALITY

- Non inflectional elements like adverbs.
 - Perhaps
 - In all possibility
- Hedges
 - I would think (that) ...
 - If I were you ...

MODALITY

- Modality deals with semantic aspects of a sentence.
- Common among all modals is that they do not represent a situation as a fact.
- It deals with a range of semantic notions.
- It has following readings :
 - possibility
 - ability
 - Necessity
 - Certainty
 - Obligations
 - Willingness

MODALS IN ENGLISH

- Can could
- May might
- Must
- Shall should
- Will would

TENSE IN ENGLISH

	SINGULAR	PLURAL	
PRES	is	are	am
PAST	was	were	
FUTURE	shall/will		

MORE THAN TWO READINGS

CAN

- Anyone can become a minister. [Possibility]
- Can I ask you a question? [Permission]
- She can walk fast! [Ability]

TENSE AUXILIARY & MODAL AUXILIARY

- No number and person distinction

- Does not mark tense
- Works separately for agreement, tense & negation
- Do not inflect or takes inflected verbs along
- Do not have infinitive (like to go, to come) or -ing forms
 - To can
 - Canning

Functions of Modal Verbs

USE OF MODALS

SUBJECT	MODAL	VERB (object)
→ Sachin	can	speak English.
• No other auxiliary verb is needed in the context of modals.		

NEGATION

- Raju likes pizza. → Raju does not like pizza
- Raju liked pizza. → Raju did not like pizza
- Raju can eat pizza. → Raju can't eat pizza.

- Raju and Ramu work at Railway station.
- Raju and Ramu do not work at Railway station.
- Raju and Ramu can work for Railways.
- Raju and Ramu can't work for Railways.

QUESTIONS

- Do you like pizza?
- Did they like pizza?
- Can they eat pizza?
- Can you eat pizza?
- What do you like?
- What can they say?

TWO READINGS

May

- May I come in? [Permission]
- We may visit Mexico this summer. [Good prob.]

Must

- Everyone must pay taxes. [Responsibility]
- She didn't arrive. She must be sick. [Assumption]

TENSE AND MODALS

Modals can be used in a tensed sentence but cannot be used ~~at~~ as tense markers.

- (1) It must have been a difficult decision.
- (2) They should have invited her to their wedding.
- (3) He must have been in a traffic jam.
- (4) Joe may/might have taken the wrong train.
- (5) You could have played better.

Modal Verbs - CAN OR COULD

MODAL VERBS

- Can and could are modal verbs.
- A modal verb is a type of verb that is used to indicate modality - that is likelihood, ability, request, capacity, suggestion, order, obligation or advice.
- Modal Verbs are can, could, may, might, must, shall, will, etc.
- Can and could have the same meaning. The differences are between present & past, informal and formal, strong and weak.

CAN vs COULD

- (I) 1. CAN - Ability (Present)
Eg: I can play tennis.
He can swim.
2. COULD - Ability (past)
Eg: I could play tennis when I was in school.
He could beat anyone in swimming in his prime.

(II)

1. CAN - general possibility

Eg: → You can fall sick if you get drenched in rain.
 → Living in New York can cost a fortune.

2. COULD - possibility

Eg: → The bus could be late. (present)
 → If you don't study, then you could fail in exam. (future)
 → He could have been successful in his career, if he had listened to his boss. (past)

(III)

POLITE EXPRESSIONS1. Making suggestions - COULD

Eg: → We could try Thai food this time.
 → We could ask the teacher to postpone the exam.

2. Making requests - CAN & COULD

Eg: → Can / Could you pass me the salt, please?
 → Can / Could I speak to Vaiga, please?

NOTE: Could is more polite than can.

3. Making offers - CAN & COULD

Eg: → Can / Could I get you something to drink?
 → Can / Could I help you with that madam?

4. Ask for permission - can & could

Eg: → Can / Could I borrow your notes please?
→ Can / Could I take a day off this week?

ACTIVITY

Question: Fill in with can or could.

- (1) Daughter: "Mom, the phone is ringing!"
Mom: Can you answer it? It could be grandpa.
- (2) I could run three kilometres without a break when I was a kid.
- (3) Many swimmers can hold their breath for more than 3 minutes under water.
- (4) Can I get you ~~out~~ something to eat?
- (5) could you send me the details by email, please?

Modals - Will / Would

MODAL VERBS : Will & Would

- Use of modals : Possibility, obligation, suggestion, permission
- Both will and would are used in similar situations, however, they are not the same.
- Will : real possibilities
- Would : imagined situations in future

USE OF WILL

- To give information about future
 - We'll head home after work.
- To talk about what we think, or guess will happen
 - Don't lend him your car. He'll crash it.
- To talk about things that we are ready to do or that we're open to doing without any issues or objections.
 - I will eat anything. I'm not picky at all.

- To talk about general rules, especially on signs or in codes of conduct or company policies and procedures:
 - Smokers will be asked to smoke outside.
- To give orders or commands.
 - You will pick up your room!

USE OF WOULD

- To talk about things that we expected to happen in the past.
 - The sky was getting cloudy, which meant it would rain.
- To talk about habits in past.
 - When we lived in the mountains, we would go hiking all the time.
 - We used to smoke / We would smoke.

NOTE → If we don't clarify that we're talking about the past, it could sound like we're talking about something we might do in the present if we had the opportunity. For clarity, it's better to use it in this way: Before we quit, we would smoke all the time.

- To talk about future in the past.

USE OF 'WILL' & 'WOULD' WITH CONDITIONALS

ZERO CONDITIONAL

zero conditional is used to talk about facts and situations which are always true. If you add one and one, you get two. (IF + Prs, Prs)

1st CONDITIONAL

With first conditional, we talk about actions/events in the future which are likely to happen. If it rains tomorrow, I'll stay at home. (IF + Prs, will + infinitive)

2nd CONDITIONAL

With second conditional, we talk about impossible things in the present or unlikely things in the future. If I had a magic wand, I would change some historical events. (IF + PstS, would + infinitive)

3rd CONDITIONAL

With third conditional we talk about things that didn't happen in the past and their imaginary results. I would never have met with her if I hadn't gone to that party.

MODESTS REQUESTS & PROPOSALS

FORMAL SITUATION

use 'would' to form request and proposal.

Eg: → Would you please come in?

→ Would you like a cup of coffee?

INFORMAL SITUATION

use 'will' to form request & proposal in an informal setting.

Eg: → Will you come in?

→ Will you like a cup of coffee?

REPORTED SPEECH & DESCRIPTIONS OF PAST HABITS

REPORTED SPEECH

→ She told me that she would be there at 8 o'clock.

DESCRIBING PAST HABITS

→ When I was young, I would play tennis with my brother. (action verb)

State Verbs should not be used with 'would' to describe past events.

→ When I was young, I would like in an old house. X

→ When I was young, I used to live in an old house. ✓

EXPRESS LIKING AND PREFERENCE FOR SOMETHING

- Words such as love, hate, prefer, like and glad are used along with 'would' to describe certain situations.

Eg: → I would be glad to help.
→ I would have to work out in the morning.
→ I would love to go on a trip to Spain.

GIVE OPINION ON UNCERTAIN THINGS

- (1) I would say he is about forty.
- (2) I think it would take about forty minutes.

EXPRESS REFUSAL TO DO SOMETHING

- (1) Reva wouldn't go to the doctor, even though she was in pain.
- (2) My bike would not start today.

WOULD WITH THE USE OF THE WORD 'WISH'

- (1) I wish she would leave me.
- (2) I wish you would be quit for a minute.

EXPRESS THE RESULT OF AN ACTION

- # Results and intentions are expressed with 'so that' or 'in order'.
 - The criminal burned all the evidence in order to escape the police.
He burned all the letters so that his mother would never read them.

Modal Verbs :

COULD VS WOULD

(1) Both could and would are used to talk about the past.

- (a) → I can run a few kilometres without any break. (present)
→ I could run a few kilometres without any break. (past)

- (b) → I know he will pass the exam. (future)
→ I knew he would pass the exam. (past)

(2) Possible and imaginary situations

- (a) → Miss Maya has set the question paper. The exam could be very tough.
→ My boss isn't responding to my mails. He could be busy.

Indicates possibility & not past form - would can't be used in place of could.

In imaginary situations, we prefer to use 'would':

- (b) → If I had a lot of money, I would retire early.
→ If Kishore worked hard, he would pass the exam.

(3) Polite Expressions

(a) Making suggestions

- We could try Thai food for dinner. ✓
- We would try Thai food for dinner. X

(b) Making Offers

- Would you like some coffee? ✓
- Could you like some tea? X

(c) Making Requests

- Could you please pass it on.
- Would you please pass it on.
- Could you please open this door for me?
- Would you please open this door for me? [very formal & polite]
- Would you mind opening the window please? ✓
(fixed phrase)
- Could you mind opening the window please? X

(4) Ask for Permission

- Could I borrow your pen for a couple of minutes?
- Would it be okay if I borrowed your bike for a couple of days?
(The verb should be in past)

ACTIVITY

Question : Fill in with could or would.

1. Would you mind sharing your notes with me?
2. Prabha could already speak three languages when she was 6.
3. If I became the prime minister, I would make health services free for everybody.
4. Could I use your laptop to send an email?
5. Would you want me to give you a ride back home?