

Appendix 4

Modal verbs (**can/could/will/would** etc.)

This appendix is a summary of modal verbs. For more information, see Units 21–41.

4.1 Compare **can/could** etc. for actions:

can	<input type="checkbox"/> I can go out tonight. (= there is nothing to stop me)
	<input type="checkbox"/> I can't go out tonight.
could	<input type="checkbox"/> I could go out tonight, but I'm not very keen.
	<input type="checkbox"/> I couldn't go out last night. (= I wasn't able)
can or may	<input type="checkbox"/> Can May } I go out tonight? (= do you allow me?)
will/won't	<input type="checkbox"/> I think I'll go out tonight.
	<input type="checkbox"/> I promise I won't go out.
would	<input type="checkbox"/> I would go out tonight, but I have too much to do.
	<input type="checkbox"/> I promised I wouldn't go out.
shall	<input type="checkbox"/> Shall I go out tonight? (do you think it is a good idea?)
should or ought to	<input type="checkbox"/> I { should ought to } go out tonight. (= it would be a good thing to do)
must	<input type="checkbox"/> I must go out tonight. (= it is necessary)
	<input type="checkbox"/> I mustn't go out tonight. (= it is necessary that I do <i>not</i> go out)
needn't	<input type="checkbox"/> I needn't go out tonight. (= it is not necessary)

Compare **could have ... / would have ...** etc. :

could	<input type="checkbox"/> I could have gone out last night, but I decided to stay at home.
would	<input type="checkbox"/> I would have gone out last night, but I had too much to do.
should or ought to	<input type="checkbox"/> I { should ought to } have gone out last night. I'm sorry I didn't.
needn't	<input type="checkbox"/> I needn't have gone out last night. (= I went out, but it was not necessary)

4.2 We use **will/would/may** etc. to say whether something is possible, impossible, probable, certain etc. Compare:

will	<input type="checkbox"/> 'What time will she be here?' 'She'll be here soon.'
would	<input type="checkbox"/> She would be here now, but she's been delayed.
should or ought to	<input type="checkbox"/> She { should ought to } be here soon. (= I expect she will be here soon)
may or might or could	<input type="checkbox"/> She { may might could } be here now. I'm not sure. (= it's possible that she is here)
must	<input type="checkbox"/> She must be here. I saw her come in.
can't	<input type="checkbox"/> She can't possibly be here. I know for certain that she's away on holiday.

Compare **would have ... / should have ...** etc. :

will	<input type="checkbox"/> She will have arrived by now. (= before now)
would	<input type="checkbox"/> She would have arrived earlier, but she was delayed.
should or ought to	<input type="checkbox"/> I wonder where she is. She { should ought to } have arrived by now.
may or might or could	<input type="checkbox"/> She { may might could } have arrived . I'm not sure. (= it's possible that she has arrived)
must	<input type="checkbox"/> She must have arrived by now. (= I'm sure – there is no other possibility)
can't	<input type="checkbox"/> She can't possibly have arrived yet. It's much too early. (= it's impossible)