

Functions of Modal Verbs

obligation/duty/necessity

- a) You **must** sign the contract.
(You are obliged to/You have to/You need to/It is necessary.)
- b) I **must** sign the contract. (I have decided.)
- c) I **have to** sign the contract. (Someone else has decided.)

lack of necessity

- a) He **doesn't need to/doesn't have to/needn't** get a taxi. I'll give him a lift. (It isn't necessary.)
- b) He **didn't need to** get a taxi because I gave him a lift. (It wasn't necessary for him to get a taxi.)
- c) He **needn't have got** a taxi. (It wasn't necessary for him to get a taxi, but he did.)

advice

- a) You **ought to/should** revise for your test.
(I advise you to/you had better)
- b) You **must** revise for your test. (I strongly advise you to.)

suggestions

- a) We **can/could** go out for a meal later.
- b) **Shall** we go out for a meal later?
(Let's .../Why don't we ...?/How about ...?/What about ...?)

ability

- a) Kim is five years old. She **can** read and write. (present)
- b) When she was three, she **could** count to ten.
(past repeated action)
- c) Tony **was able to** win the race. (managed to do; past single action)

lack of ability

- a) Ann **can't** play the piano. (present)
- b) She **couldn't** swim fast when she was young.
(past repeated action)
- c) She **couldn't** reach the top shelf, even though she tried. (past single action)

asking permission

- a) **Can** I open the window, please? (informal)
- b) **Could** I open the window, please? (more polite)
- c) **May/Might** I open the window, please? (formal)
(Do you mind if ...?/Would you mind if ...?)

giving permission

- a) You **can** leave your luggage here.
(you are allowed to do sth; informal)
- b) You **may** leave your luggage in this area.
(you are allowed to do sth; formal - probably written)

refusing permission

- a) You **can't/mustn't** park here.
(you are not allowed to do sth; informal)
- b) You **may not** park in this area.
(you are not allowed to do sth; formal - usually written notice)

requests

- a) **Can/Will** you help me with this exercise? (informal)
- b) **Could/Would** you help me with this exercise?
(more polite)
- c) **May** I have one of those leaflets? (formal)
- d) **Might** I have one of those leaflets? (very formal)

prohibition

You **mustn't/can't** lie in court. (it's forbidden/you aren't allowed to/it's against the rules)

asking for suggestions or instructions

When/How **shall** I contact you?

possibility

- a) She **could/may/might** finish her work by six o'clock.
(it is possible/it is likely/perhaps)
- b) She **could/might have been** late. (... Luckily, she wasn't late.)

offers

Shall/Can/Could I help you cross the road?
(Would you like me to help you cross the road?)

logical assumptions

- a) She **must** be on holiday. (positive; I'm sure she is.)
- b) She **can't** be working. (negative; I'm sure she isn't.)
- c) He **must have been** on holiday. (positive)
- d) He **can't have been** at home. (negative)

criticism

He **ought to/should have told** her the truth.
(It would have been better if he had told her the truth.)

UNIT 5

Modal Verbs

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Match the items in column A to their synonyms in column B.

A	B
1 You should/ought to...	a You aren't allowed to ...
2 You must ...	b It wasn't necessary for us to ... (but we did)
3 Shall we ...?	c Why don't we ...?
4 You needn't ...	d He managed to ...
5 We needn't have ...	e It wasn't necessary for us to ...
6 We didn't need to ...	f You had better ...
7 You mustn't ...	g I'm sure she's ...
8 He was able to ...	h Do you mind if I ...?
9 She must be ...	i You are obliged to ...
10 He can't be ...	j It isn't necessary for you to ...
11 Could I ...?	k I'm sure he isn't ...
12 He may be ...	l Perhaps he's ...

19

Rephrase the following sentences in as many ways as possible.

- I advise you to buy this book.
... *You should/ought to buy this book...*
- It isn't necessary for him to take the exam again.
.....
- I'm sure Terry isn't at the office.
.....
- It is possible that Janet will call me this evening.
.....
- You aren't allowed to eat and drink in the classrooms.
.....
- We are obliged to clock in and out every day.
.....
- I'm sure the boys weren't upset with the result.
.....
- Would you like me to do anything to help?
.....
- Perhaps we will go for a picnic on Sunday afternoon.
.....
- Sam managed to reach the top of the mountain after climbing for several hours.
.....
- How about throwing a party on your birthday?
.....
- It wasn't necessary for John to attend the seminar.
.....
- They are obliged to go to a meeting every week.
.....
- How about visiting some friends on Saturday?
.....

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Underline the correct word(s).

- A: Could/May/Shall you tell me the time, please?
B: Yes. It's a quarter past ten.
- A: Would/Shall/Will we go shopping tonight?
B: Yes. We need to buy some food.
- A: May/Should/Would I help you, madam?
B: Yes, please. Can/Shall/Would I have these shoes in black, please?
- A: Would/Should/Shall I get you another cup of tea?
B: No, thank you. I've had enough.
- A: Can/Shall/May you post this letter for me, please?
B: Certainly. I'll do it on my way home from work.
- A: Shall/Would/Could I speak to Jenny, please?
B: I'm sorry, she's not here at the moment.
A: Oh. Must/Shall/Would I call later, then?
- A: May/Will/Would I have a glass of water, please?
B: Yes, I'll get you one.
A: Could/May/Shall you put ice in it, please?
- A: Did you call Jane?
B: No, I didn't need to/needn't because I saw her at work.
- A: Shall/May/Could you help me, please?
B: Yes, of course.
- A: You mustn't/needn't/couldn't lock the door.
B: Oh, will you do it when you leave?

21

Underline the correct word(s).

Dear Victoria,

I'm writing to tell you about the play I'm going to be in. It's called 'Only for You', and I've got the leading role. I have a lot of lines and I 1) must/might learn them all before opening night.

We're performing the play for the first time on Friday night. We've been told that a TV company 2) must/may come to film it, so I 3) could/must be on television. I 4) needn't/might even become famous!

We 5) might/have to rehearse the play every night until Friday, because everything 6) must/shall be perfect for the performance. We 7) couldn't/mustn't make any mistakes. 8) Can/Must you come to see the play, or will you be at work? I hope you'll be able to come. If not, I'll write and tell you how it went.

I 9) could/must go and learn my lines now. See you soon.

Yours,
Charles

22

Choose the correct answer.

- 1 'You ...**C**... be late for work.'
'I know. I'm leaving now.'
A needn't B must C mustn't
- 2 'Jim lose some weight. His doctor said so.'
'Then he must go on a diet.'
A mustn't B can C has to
- 3 'I go to the bank today. I have enough money.'
'Well, I'll go alone, then.'
A needn't B have to C must
- 4 'Did you deliver that parcel for me?'
'No, I find the house, so I've come back to get a map.'
A can B could C couldn't
- 5 'I clean the house today. It's dirty.'
'I'll help you.'
A needn't B must C mustn't
- 6 'I feed the dog at lunchtime. My brother did it in the morning.'
'You can do it this evening, then.'
A didn't need to B needn't have C need
- 7 'Do you need any help?'
'Yes. I open the window. It's stuck.'
A could B am able to C can't
- 8 'I swim until I was ten.'
'Well, I didn't learn until I was eleven.'
A can B can't C couldn't
- 9 'Can I talk to you, please?'
'Sorry, I go now. I'm late for a meeting.'
A mustn't B has to C must
- 10 'Is Tom good at languages?'
'Yes, he already speak French, German and Italian.'
A can't B can C could
- 11 'The test was too difficult for me.'
'Oh dear, I do it quite easily.'
A was able to B can't C can
- 12 'Where's Tom?'
'He's not at work, so he be at the library.'
A must B can't C can
- 13 '..... we go shopping today?'
'No. I'd prefer to go tomorrow.'
A Ought B Shall C Will
- 14 'Sorry Mum. I've broken a plate.'
'You be more careful.'
A may B should C might
- 15 'Where's your father?'
'He be in the garage.'
A might B can C mustn't

23

Fill in can, can't, must, mustn't, needn't or have to.

- 1 A: Is Matthew very rich?
B: He ...**must**... be. He drives a Ferrari.

- 2 A: Would you like to come shopping with me?
B: Yes, but I I do my homework this afternoon.
- 3 A: Is Tom interested in music?
B: Oh yes. He play the guitar and the saxophone.
- 4 A: Is Katie at home?
B: No, she be. Her car is not here.
- 5 A: Can I go to the cinema tonight?
B: Yes, but you be late home.
- 6 A: Hurry up. You'll be late for school!
B: I don't go to school today. It's Saturday.
- 7 A: I bought you this present.
B: Oh, you have. It's not my birthday!
- 8 A: Excuse me, I'm looking for Barkwest Bank.
B: I'm afraid I help you. I don't live here.

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Complete the sentences, as in the example. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

Modal	Use
1 ... Shall ... we go to the zoo?	making a suggestion
2 You try harder.	giving advice
3 You take photographs here.	expressing prohibition
4 I carry this bag for you?	making an offer
5 you turn off the lights, please?	making a request
6 You have been more careful.	expressing criticism
7 I make a phone call, please?	asking for permission
8 Tom walk; he's only six months old.	expressing lack of ability
9 Mary send us a card.	expressing possibility
10 You wear a seatbelt while driving.	expressing obligation
11 They be tired.	expressing a positive logical assumption
12 I'm sorry, but you go out.	refusing permission
13 He be French.	expressing a negative logical assumption
14 You sit here.	giving permission