

© UFS, Inc.

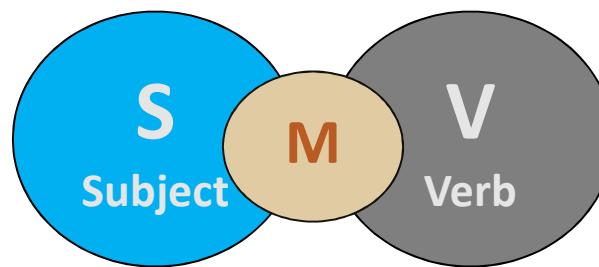
MODAL VERBS: STRUCTURE & USE

What are modal verbs?

- Can
- Could
- May
- Might
- Must
- Shall
- Should
- Ought to
- Will
- Would

They are **Auxiliary verbs** that provide additional and specific meaning to the main verb of the sentence

How do we use modals?



Example: **Mary** **could** play the piano

They do not accept conjugation
They do not need other auxiliary verbs

Form

There is no “s” in singular

There is no “do / does” in the question

There is no “don’t / doesn’t” in the negative

- ☒ He can ski He cans ski or He can skiS → incorrect
- ☒ Would you like to come with me?
Do you would like to come with me? → incorrect
- ☒ They can't be serious
They don't can be serious → incorrect

Form

Modal verbs do not have **infinitives** or **-ing** forms

~~to can / caning~~

~~to must / musting~~

Modal verbs are followed by an infinitive without **to**

She **must** study (strong obligation)

We **should** have gone the other way (recommendation)

He **could** play football in his youth (ability in the past)

Form

Modal verbs do **not** have **all the tenses**

Modal verbs use other verbs to complete the tenses

Can is completed with **be able to**

Must is completed with **have to**

They **can** play the piano

They **will be able to** play the piano in the future

You **must** come early

You **had to** come early yesterday

What do they express?

They can have more than one meaning
depending on the situations

1. **Single Concept Modal:** they have **one** meaning
2. **Double Concept Modal:** they have **two** meanings
3. **Modals in past:** They are used to express a situation in the past

Categories

Single concept Modals	Double Concept Modals	Modals in Past
Will	May	Would have
Might	Must	Could have
Should	Would	Might have
Ought to	Shall	Should have
Had better	Could	May have
	Can	Must have

Single Concept Modal

Modal	Concept	Examples
Will	Future	Joe will travel to NY next week
Might	Small probability	I might move to Canada some day
Should	Recommendation	You should go to the doctor
Ought to	Formal recommendation	We ought to know about first aids
Had better	Warning	I had better study or I will fail the test

Double Concept Modal

Modal	Concept	Examples
May (1)	Permission	May I come in?
May (2)	Good probability	We may visit Mexico this summer
Must (1)	Responsibility	Everyone must pay taxes
Must (2)	Assumption	She didn't arrive. She must be sick
Would (1)	Past (used to)	When I was young, I would play soccer
Would (2)	Present unreal	I would buy the car but I can't afford it

Double Concept Modal

Modal	Concept	Examples
Shall (1)	Educated expression Offer	Excuse me, I shall go now Shall I clean it?
Shall (2)	Contractual obligation	The company shall pay on January 1st
Could (1)	Unreal Ability	I could go if I had time
Could (2)	Past Ability	She could play the piano (but she can't anymore)
Can (1)	Present Ability	We can speak English
Can (2)	Permission	Can I have a candy?

	PROBABILITY/ POSSIBILITY	ABILITY	PERMISSION	OBLIGATION/ ADVICE	OFFERS
CAN		I can play the piano	Can I go out tonight?		
CAN'T	She can't be his mum. She's too young	I can't speak German	Can I borrow the car? No, I can't.		
MIGHT	It might rain tomorrow				
COULD	It could rain tomorrow	I could already read when I was two	Could I see your passport please, sir?		
MAY	It may rain tomorrow		May I leave the table?		
MUST	She must be his sister because they look alike.			You must leave before the clock strikes twelve.	
HAVE TO				I have to study tonight.	
SHALL				You shall pay on Tuesday	Shall I help you?
SHOULD / OUGHT TO				You should see it. It's excellent.	
HAD BETTER				You had better sleep more.	
WOULD					Would you like a drink?

Modals in the Past

- They are modals referred to actions that happened in the past

MODAL + HAVE + verb in past participle

It **must have been** a difficult decision

They **should have invited** her to their wedding

Practise

1. My son ___ be home by now. Where can he be?
a. Have to b. would c. should d. could
2. I think your thumb is broken. You ___ go to the emergency room.
a. Might b. could c. ought to d. can
3. If you are interested in losing weight, you _____ try this new diet.
a. Could b. mustn't c. don't have to d. had to
4. John's fallen down the stairs! I _____ call an ambulance!
a. Will b. might c. may d. ought to
5. You _____ come too early. We won't leave until 9 o'clock.
a. Has to b. must c. needn't d. can't

Practise

6. Children _____ be accompanied by an adult at the zoo.
- a. Ought to b. must c. would d. mustn't
7. You _____ talk during tests. It's forbidden!
- a. don't have to b. mustn't c. couldn't d. ought to
8. I can feel the heat. We _____ be near the fire.
- a. Can b. would c. must d. have to
9. They _____ hear him because he was whispering.
- a. Wouldn't b. mustn't c. shouldn't d. couldn't
10. You've never heard of Britney Spears? You _____ be serious!
- a. Must b. had to c. can't d. shouldn't

Practise

11. _____ you like to have dinner with me tonight?
- a. Could b. may c. should d. would
12. You _____ let him hear about the party tomorrow. It's a surprise!
- a. mustn't b. wouldn't c. couldn't d. can
13. _____ I speak to the Chief Councillor, please?
- a. Must b. May c. Would d. Need
14. He has arrived late. He _____ missed the bus
- a. Must have b. Should have c. Could have d. must

More practise

Re-write the following sentences using modals so that they have the same meaning.

5. Look at his dirty clothes! I'm sure he is a poor person.

He must be a poor person

6. I don't believe that the legend of Hercules is true because there are many contradictions.

The legend of Hercules can't be true

Use your imagination



Think about these situations and create a sentence using modals.

1. We are going to Paris for a weekend. (Make suggestions about things to do)
2. We start school in September. (Talk about necessity)
3. Margaret is a very talented sportswoman. (Talk about ability)
4. You have just won the lottery! (Talk about possibility)
5. Peter has got a headache and a congested nose. (Give him some advice)
6. You want to borrow your uncle's Mercedes Benz. (Ask for permission politely)

Possible answers



1. We could visit the Louvre / We should go up the Eiffel Tower
2. We have to buy a new notebook
3. She can speak 3 languages! / She is able to play the piano and the violin
4. I might stop working / I may buy a new car / I can travel to New York
5. You should see a doctor / You ought to drink hot tea
6. Can I borrow your car, please? or May I borrow your car, please?