

modal verbs:  
secrets of functionality

must

Hard hats **must** be worn at the building site.  
You **mustn't** smoke here.

– law, regulation, or requirement

\*synonym: **be to**



I **must** work hard to pass this exam.  
We **must** rush to the airport, or we'll be late!

- “inner” obligation:  
something you understand as  
necessary



This dress suits you perfectly, you simply **must** buy it.  
You **mustn't** work so much!

– strong advice  
(informal situations)



They **must** win! They trained so hard!  
This **must** be our engineer, I know him by sight.  
Our bus **must** arrive at 7.15.

- deduction with high certainty

\*synonym: **be bound to, be due to**



have to

We **have to** observe formal dresscode at work.  
Unfortunately, he **has to** work on Saturdays.

- “outer” obligation: you have no choice

This lecture is not compulsory, she **doesn't have to** go.  
You can make a donation, but you **don't have to**.

- lack of obligation  
(you can do it, but it's not required)





This terrible rain **has to** stop soon!  
I'm taking this headache pill, and it **has to** help.

- certainty in the future, laws of nature, etc.

\*synonym: **should**



should

You look tired, you **should** take a break.  
You **shouldn't** say such things, it isn't nice.

– mild advice

\*synonym: **ought to**



We should have informed him earlier.  
I shouldn't have eaten all this heavy food:  
now I have a stomach ache.

- regrets about the past



We believe that the war **should** end soon.  
The prices for the real estate in this area  
**should** get more moderate with time.

- deduction/hopes for the future



**Should** you have any questions, feel free to contact me.  
**Should** the system fail, there's an alarm button.  
**Should** you forget to call, I'll remind you.

– Subjunctive Mood:  
“in the unlikely event of...”



And who **should** call me at 2 am but my silly sister!  
Who what do you think I **should** forget to take?  
Of course it was my passport!

- “what else but X”



would



The company **would** finish this project.  
I **would** rather go home than stay.  
**Would** Madam like some champagne?

- want, would like



When we met, they **would** always come late.  
I **would** have coffee in the morning,  
but now I prefer tea.

– used to;  
habitual actions in the past



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“Professor Smith keeps giving us lots of homework” –  
“Typical! He **would**!”

“They **would** close the highway near my house to public every time a government official drives this way”

- negative attitude to present habits



will

Will you send these files to me immediately, please.  
Will you be quiet!

- orders from superiors



Stupid lumberjacks **will** always cut out half a forest.  
Jane **will** get upset every time somebody comments on  
her work.

- general truth or habits  
(often with disapproval)



This idiotic Xerox **won't** work!  
The door **won't** open. It's stuck.  
My son **won't** understand math, however hard we try.

- “rage against the machine”  
(mostly inanimate objects  
when they don't function properly)

