

MODAL VERBS

MODAL VERBS are auxiliary verbs used to express:

1. ABILITY: Can, be able to

He can / is able to ride a bicycle / to fly a plane

I will be able to drive when I pass my driving license exam.

I could / was able to impress my teachers when I was in the kindergarten

Note: “**be able to**” is more formal than “**can**”

2. ADVICE: Ought to, should and had better.

You should leave your boyfriend he’s a rude and very aggressive person.

You ought to just be yourself.

You shouldn’t go to the bed so late you have to get up early tomorrow.

Note: “**ought to**” has the same meaning as “should”, but is not usually used in the negative or questions. “Should” is also more common than “ought to”.

Use “**had better**” for recommendations, desperate hope or to warn people.

You had better not move, there’s a poisonous snake just behind you.

Note: “**must**” and “have to” can be also used for give strong advices.

You have to visit a shrink (Psiquiatra), you are absolutely insane.

You must eat more, you are too skinny.

3. OBLIGATION: Have to, must and have got to.

“**Have to**” is used for external obligation.

I have to wear uniform (It’s the company’s policy).

You have to be back home at 12 o’clock as very later.

“**Must**” is used for internal obligation and in official instructions and manuals.

Passengers must fasten their seat belts.

Employees must wash their hands before returning work.

I must start doing sport I’m very fat / unfit.

“**Have got to**” means the same as “have to” and is used a lot in spoken English and informal writing and expresses a very strong feeling.

I have got to go home because my father has suffered an accident.

She’s got to get a job she’s currently unemployed.

4. PROHIBITION: mustn’t and can’t.

You can’t / mustn’t drive without driving license

MODAL VERBS

5. LACK OF OBLIGATION (don't have to) or **NECESSITY** (needn't)

We use **need** mostly in the negative form to indicate that there is no obligation or necessity to do something:

I don't have to wear uniform in my new job.

I needn't have a bachelor's degree to work as a waiter.

Affirmatives with the semi-modal verb need are not common and they are used in formal contexts. There is almost always a negative word (e.g. no one, nobody, and nothing) or phrase in the clause, even if the verb phrase is affirmative:

No one **need** know the name of the applicants.

6. LOGICAL DEDUCTION: must, could, can't, might and may

Use "**must**" when you're almost sure that something is true.

It must be cold outside because has been snowing the whole day.

Use "**can't**" when you're pretty sure that something is impossible or false

He can't be the thief; he's a really nice person.

Use "**might**", **could** or "**may**" when you think that something is possible or true but you are not absolutely sure.

She might / could be stuck in a traffic jam.

He may be still sleeping, he's very sleepy head.

7. POSSIBILITY: can, could, may, might.

Use "**can**" when the possibility of something happens is very high

Don't worry, we can do it later.

We can go to the shopping center to buy everything you need.

Use "**could**", "**may**" or "**might**" to express that something is possible.

It could / may / might be quicker to travel by train.

It could / may / might be better travel to Marrakech in spring, it's boiling in summer.

8. Polite Request: could, can, may might.

Could you tell me when the train leaves?

Do you know when the library opens?

Can you take me to the bus station, please? (Very informal)

Would you please help me with my luggage?

Would you mind telling me when start the show?

May I leave earlier; I have to visit my grandmother (Formal)

MODAL VERBS

Might I come in? (Very formal)

9. **SUGGESTION:** can, could and shall

You can take either a taxi or the bus.

You could sleep in my house I've got a free room.

We shall go to the cinema.

NOTE: "**shall**" is only used in the first person singular and plural

PERFECT MODAL VERBS. MODAL VERBS + HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

1. **MUST HAVE** expresses a logical deduction.

My bag has gone, someone must have stolen it while I was distracted.

I must have deleted the email, I can't find it.

2. **COULD HAVE** expresses a possibility.

You could have asked the doctor before taking the medicine.

The wallet could have fallen out of my pocket

3. **COULDN'T HAVE** expresses an impossibility

He couldn't have stolen the laptop he was with me all the time.

But Peter couldn't have cared less.

4. **MAY / MIGHT HAVE** expresses a supposition.

She may have taken the wrong bus.

She might have given my handbag to another person.

5. **WOULD HAVE** expresses a wish.

I would have gone to your party but I had to work.

If he found out that you have cheated him, he would have gotten furious

6. **SHOULD / OUGHT TO** expresses a regret or criticism.

You should have thanked his help. He was very kind and friendly with you.

I ought to have known that it was a big mistake.

7. **SHOULDN'T HAVE** expresses a regret or criticism.

The grasshopper knew that he shouldn't have been lazy during the summer.

You shouldn't have forgotten her birthday.

8. **NEEDN'T HAVE** expresses an unnecessary action

You needn't have brought anything to my party.

You needn't have bought anything for the baby, he has a lot of things, but thanks anyway.