



MODAL VERBS



Can/ Be able to / Can't

■ CAN

● Different uses:

- Abilities or capacities (to know or to be able to).
 - Mary can swim very fast.
- Request, ask or give permission
 - Can you call me tonight.
- Possibility
 - I can meet you later.
- It can also be used for suggestions.
 - You can eat ravioli if you like pasta.



■ Be able to

- It expresses abilities like *can* and it is used in all the verbal tenses where *can* is not used.
 - I was able to finish my homework on time

■ Can't

- Different uses:
 - Impossibility in the present
 - Mary can't swim very fast
 - Lack of ability (not to know) or capacity (not to be able to): I can't eat a whole cake by myself
 - Prohibition
 - You can't drive without a licence
 - Disbelief
 - That can't be the price – it's much too cheap.

Could

- It is the past of *can* and it is used to express:
 - Ability or capacity in the past
 - She could run fast when she was a child
 - Polite request
 - Could you help me with these suitcases?
 - Polite suggestion
 - You could exercise and eat healthier food
 - Possibility –less probable than with *can*-
 - Mark could join us the cinema.



May/ might

- Both of them express possibility, but *might* is more remote.
 - It may/ might rain tomorrow
- In questions, may is the polite way of asking for things.
 - May I have a coffee, please?



Would

- In questions, it is a formal way of asking for things.
 - Would you open the window, please?
- With the verb “like” is used to make offers and invitations.
 - Would you like something to drink?





Must / Have to

- Both express obligation, but *must* is only used in the present and *have to* in the other tenses. Authority people use *must*, while *have to* is used by everybody.
 - You must bring your books to class
 - I have to buy the tickets today.
- *Must* is also used to express a logical deduction about present fact.
 - She's got a great job. She must be very happy.

Need to / Needn't

- Need to is not a modal, but it is used in affirmative sentences, like *have to*, to express obligation and necessity.
 - I need to cook dinner tonight.
- Needn't, on the contrary, is a modal and indicates lack of obligation and necessity, like *don't have to*
 - You needn't bring anything to the party.



Musn't / Don't have to

- *Musn't* shows prohibition.
 - You musn't exceed the speed limit
- *Don't have to* means *not have to*, i.e., lack of obligation and necessity, like *needn't*
 - I don't have to get up early tomorrow



Should /Ought to

- Both of them express advise or opinion, but *should* is used more frequently, since *ought to* is quite strange in negative and interrogative.
 - You should/ought to improve your pronunciation



Shall

- It is used in the interrogative to offer oneself to do something and to make a suggestion.
 - Shall I help you with your luggage?





	ABILITY	REQUEST	POSSIBILITY	INABILITY
CAN	Mary can swim very fast	Can you call me tonight?	I can meet you later	
BE ABLE TO	I was able to finish my homework on time			
CAN'T				I can't eat a whole cake by myself
COULD	She could run fast when she was a child (past)	Could you help me with the suitcases? (polite)	Mark could join us at the cinema	
MAY/MIGHT			It may/might rain tomorrow	
MAY		May I join this team? (polite)		
WOULD		Would you open the window, please? (formal)		
MUST				
HAVE TO				
NEED TO				
NEEDN'T				
DON'T HAVE TO				
MUSTN'T				
SHOULD / OUGHT TO				
SHALL				



CAN
BE ABLE TO
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PROHIBITION	DISBELIEF	SUGGESTION/ OFFER	OBLIGATION/ NECESSITY
You can't drive without a licence	That can't be the price - it's much too cheap		
		You could exercise and eat healthier food (plite)	
		Would you like something to drink?	
			You must bring your books to class (strong)
			I have to buy the tickets today
			I need to cook dinner tonight.
You musn't exceed the speed limit			
		Shall I help you with your luggage?	



	CERTAINTY OF TRUE	LACK OBLIGATION/ NECESSITY	ADVICE/ OPINION
CAN			
BE ABLE TO			
CAN'T			
COULD			
MAY/MIGHT			
MAY			
WOULD	She's got a great job. She must be very happy.		
MUST			
HAVE TO			
NEED TO		You needn't bring anything to the party	
NEEDN'T		I don't have to get up early tomorrow	
DON'T HAVE TO			
MUSTN'T			
SHOULD / OUGHT TO			You should/ ought to improve your pronunciation
SHALL			

MODAL PERFECTS

- **Must have + participle**
 - It expresses a logical conclusion about a past fact.
 - Rob has arrived late. He must have been in a traffic jam.
- **May/might have + participle**
 - We use it to make a supposition about something in the past.
 - She may/might have taken the wrong bus.





- Could have + participle
 - Ability to do something in the past which in the end was not done
 - You could have asked the doctor before taking the medicine.
- Couldn't have + participle
 - Certainty that something did not happen
 - He couldn't have gone to the concert because he was doing the test.



- **Would have + participle**
 - Desire to do something in the past which in fact could not be done.
 - I would have gone to the party, but I was too busy.
- **Should/ought to + participle**
 - Criticism or regret after an event
 - You should/ought to have warned me earlier
- **Shouldn't have + participle**
 - Criticism or regret after an event, showing that it shouldn't have happened
 - He shouldn't have forgotten about her birthday



- Needn't have + participle
 - An unnecessary past action
 - You needn't have brought anything to my party.

Should /Had better

■ Should/had better

- Had better is used in a more colloquial way of expressing what someone has to do, to give advise or opinions.
 - You'd better go to the doctor.
- It also it is used to express a warning
 - You'd better tidy your room now

