

MODAL VERBS

Modal verbs are used to express certain hypothetical conditions, such as advice, capability, or requests (there's a list of some modal verbs in the next section). They are auxiliary verbs that provide additional and specific meaning to the main verb of the sentence. Also, they are sometimes referred to as Modal Auxiliary Verbs because they help other verbs.



ABILITY Can & Could

We use "**can**" to talk about someone's skill or general abilities, or the negative form, **cannot or can't**, shows that the subject is unable to do something. And we use "**could**" and **couldn't** to talk about the past:

Examples:

- He **can** speak several languages.
- They **can't** dance very well.
- She **could** speak several languages when she was 10.
- I **couldn't** see you.



PERMISSION Can, Could, May

We use "**can**" to ask for permission, or give permission to do something, but "**could**" and "**may**" is more formal and polite than "**can**". Also, the negative form "**can't**" and "**may not**" to refuse permission or say that someone does not have permission:

Examples: Ask for permission



- **Can** I ask a question, please?
- **Could** we go home now?
- **May** I borrow your dictionary?

Examples: Give permission.



- You **can** go home now.
- You **may** take my pencil.

Examples: Refuse permission.



- You **can't** go home yet.
- You **may not** take my pencil.

ADVICE Should & Ought to

We use **should** and **shouldn't** to make **give advice and suggestions** or insistence advice you can use **ought to** :

Examples:

- You **should** send an email.
- You **shouldn't** go by train.

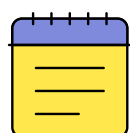


- We **ought to** study more for the test.



OBLIGATION Must & Have to.

We use "**must**" or "**have to**" to say that it is necessary to do something. Also, the negative form use "**mustn't**" for prohibitions, to say that it is necessary to not do something:



Examples:

- You **must** stop at a red light.
- They **have to** finish the report by 5:00.



- You **mustn't** make any noise in the library.



POSSIBILITY May, Might & Could.

We use may, might and could to say that something is possible, but not certain:

Examples:

- They **may** come by car.
- They **might** be at home.
- If we don't hurry, we **could** be late.



REQUESTS Will, Would, & Could.

We use would, and could as polite ways of telling or asking someone to do something. Also, can and will is less polite:

Examples:

- **Would** you please close our windows?
- **Could** you pass me that book, please?
- **Will** you marry me?
- **Can** you take a message, please?

