

Modals and Semi Modals

What are They ?

shall

may

might

will

should

can

would

must

could

ought to

have to

have got to

*We use Modal verbs to talk about an ability/a duty/
a need /a necessity/wanting..*

What is special about them?

Modal verbs behave very differently from normal verbs.

Here are some important differences:

1. Modal verbs are always followed by a verb in its **base form**.

EXAMPLES:

He can *speaks* Chinese.

Compare: I speak Chinese.

He *speaks* Chinese

You may *take* the book to school.

She may *take* the book to school.

Compare: You *take* the books to school.

She *takes* the books to school.

2. Modal verbs do not take "-s" in the third person in the present simple.

EXAMPLES:

- He *speaks* Chinese.
- He can *speaks* Chinese. (NOT- *He cans speak...*)
- She *eats* a sandwich at 9:30
- She may *eat* a sandwich at 9:30.

3. We use "not" to make modal verbs negative, even in Simple Present and Simple Past.

(We don't use the helping verb "do")

EXAMPLES:

He should not *be* late.

They might not *come* to the party.

Compare: I don't like to be late.

I cannot *eat* any more cakes.

I don't *eat* carrot cakes.

4. Many modal verbs cannot be used in the past tenses or the future tenses.

EXAMPLES:

He will can go with us. **WRONG**

She must studi**ed** very hard. **WRONG**

will- will not - won't

We use this modal to speak about future actions that we are sure/ convinced about.

will- will not(=won't)

Today is Tuesday. Tomorrow **will be** Wednesday.

= I know it because this is a known fact.

We **will not be** in the office tomorrow.

= I know it because he is going on vacation.

Can – Could – Be able to

We use these modals to express:

- General ability/ disability
- possibility / impossibility
- opportunity
- Permission
- request

Can

I can walk.

= I have the general ability to do the action of walking.

I can't hear you, it is too noisy.

= I don't have the ability to hear what you are saying because of the noise.


Can

I have some free time. I **can** help her now.

=I have the opportunity to help her.

I **can't** help her now because I don't have any time.

=I don't have the opportunity to help her.

Can  Could

In the past, can changes to could.

He **could** speak only Hebrew when he was a kid. He **couldn't** speak to his neighbor who speaks only English.

(General ability)

may

=future possibility/get permission

may

- I **may** choose to wear the red dress to the party.

=I have two dresses. There is a chance that I will choose to wear the red dress and not the blue one.

- Today, he **may** come on time.

=Although usually he comes late,

There is a possibility that today he will come on time.

may

- **May** I come to visit you at 5 o'clock?

=I want to come to you but I'm not sure that you want me to come/that you will be at home/that you will let me enter .

- You **may** take only one candy.

=Although there are more candies, I permit you to take only one of them!

might

=possibility

might

- We **may** come on time, but if you miss the bus, we **might** be late.

=I plan to come on time and this is why I want to catch the 7:15 bus.

If I catch the 7:30 bus, I can come on time or not, I'm not sure.

- If you advertise on the Internet you **might** get a lot of spam to your e-mail box.

=Although you don't want to get spam, there's a risk that you will get it.

should

= advice or a strong suggestion.

- If you want to be a champion you **should** practice every day.
 - =You don't have to practice but then, you will not get better.
- When you make a cheese cake, you **should** first check that you have cheese.
 - or else, it will not be a cheese cake

must - mustn't

Must – very strong advice/ obligation

Mustn't – things you're not allowed to do.

- She is sick. She has high fever. She **must** take a pill.
= very strong advice/ obligation
- You **mustn't** ride your bike without a helmet!
= you're not allowed to do.

Semi modals

have to - has to

had to – will have to

= it is necessary

=shows obligation and giving advice.

have to/has to –in the present/near future

had to –in the past

will have to –in the future

- I **have to** clean my room.
(My mother forces me to do it.)
- She **has to** finish the test before the bell rings.
(After the bell rings, you can't go on answering the questions.)
- Gail Devers **had to** take radiation therapy for her decease.
(...to get well.)
- At the end of the 8th grade we **will have to** leave our school.
(...and go to high school.)

don't have to

doesn't have to

Don't have to / Doesn't have to

= it isn't necessary

Ought to – be supposed to – be allowed to

- Ought to
- be supposed to = we expect him/her to
- be allowed to = permission someone will let/permit him do it.

- That's a great movie. You **ought** to see it! (or You **must** see it.)
- The teacher **is supposed to** base the grades on the tests and assignments.
- On Friday, the students in our school don't **have to** wear the school uniform. They are **allowed to** wear any color they want. (They **are permitted to** / They **can** even wear a pink shirt with yellow stripes.)

(be) able to

be able to show an ability.

-I don't know when I will be ready. I will be able to give you an answer later.

-Is he able to do it? Yes, he knows how to do it and has time to do it.

(=Can he do it?)