

MODAL VERBS AND PERIPHRASTIC MODALS

<p>Ability: Can, Could, Be able</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can</i> he swim? • My brother <i>could</i> swim when he was two. • I <i>couldn't</i> find my keys this morning. • I <i>could have</i> run faster, but I didn't want the others to get tired. • She <i>has not been able to</i> walk since the accident. • He <i>was able to</i> speak to Ann before she left. • Will people <i>be able to</i> live on the moon one day, do you think? 	<p>No necessity: Don't have to, Shouldn't have, Didn't need to, needn't have</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You <i>don't have to</i> pick us up – We can take a taxi. • They <i>didn't have to</i> go through customs. • You <i>shouldn't have</i> bothered making lunch – we could have bought a sandwich. • He <i>didn't need to</i> have any fillings at the dentist's • They <i>needn't have</i> waited.
<p>Possibility: Could, May, Might, Can</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Could/Might</i> you have lost it on the way home? • She <i>may/might/could</i> be ill. I'll phone her. • I <i>may have/might have</i> left my purse in the shop. • Amy <i>might/may</i> know the answer. • I <i>might/may</i> not go if I'm tired. • He <i>might have</i> enjoyed the party if he'd gone. • It <i>can</i> get very cold in here at night. 	<p>Advice and criticism: Ought to, Should</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ought we to/ Should</i> we write and thank him? • She <i>ought to/ should</i> go out more often. • You <i>ought to have / should have</i> gone to bed earlier. • You <i>shouldn't</i> borrow the car without asking. • I <i>ought to / should</i> go on a diet. • I <i>ought to have / should have</i> asked her first.
<p>Permission: Can, Could, May</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can</i> we come in? • <i>Could</i> we possibly stay at your flat? • Staff <i>may</i> take their break between 12 and 2. (Written) • <i>May</i> I sit here? (Formal) 	<p>Assumptions and deductions: Will, Should, Must, Can't</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That <i>will</i> be James – he's often early. • The book <i>should</i> be interesting. • There <i>must be</i> a leak. • You <i>must have</i> dialled the wrong number. • You <i>can't have</i> finished already!
<p>Prohibition: Must not, May not, Cannot</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You <i>mustn't</i> tell her anything. • You <i>can't</i> get up until you are better. • Crockery <i>may not</i> be taken out of the canteen. (Written) • You <i>must not</i> begin until I tell you. (Formal) 	<p>Requests: Can, Could, Will, Would</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Can</i> you pass me the dictionary? • <i>Could</i> you help me with my translation? • <i>Will</i> you buy me an ice-cream, Mum? • <i>Would</i> you type this letter for me, please? <p><i>Could and Would</i> are more formal than <i>Can and Will</i>.</p>
<p>Obligation: Have (got) to, Must</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All visitors <i>must</i> report to reception on arrival. (Written) • I <i>must</i> get that report finished today. 	<p>Offers and suggestions: Shall, Will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Shall</i> I do the washing-up? • <i>Shall</i> we go now? • <i>Shall</i> we dance?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do you have to write your name on the form?</i> • <i>She had to throw the burnt cake away.</i> • <i>You will have to wait, I'm afraid.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>I'll take you to the airport.</i> <p><i>In modern English the traditional difference between Shall and Will has almost disappeared, and Shall is not used very much at all, especially in NAmE. Shall is now only used with I and we, and often sounds formal and old-fashioned. People are more likely to say: I'll (= I will) be late and 'You'll (= you will) apologize immediately.' 'No I won't!'</i></p> <p><i>In BrE Shall is still used with I and we in questions or when you want to make a suggestion or an offer: What shall I wear to the party?// Shall we order some coffee?// I'll drive, shall I?</i></p>
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Taken from: Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary

Pragmatics of the modals

Modals can be of **social interaction** (interaction with other people) and **logical probability**, among other uses.

Compare these two sentences:

- You **may** leave the room, but not during the exam. (Permission= Social interaction)
- It **may** rain tomorrow (It is probable= logical probability)

I. General requests with modals (Social interaction)

Will/Would/Can/Could you help me fix dinner? (Would and Could are more polite)

When we use Will and Would we don't know if the person is willing to do the action.

When we use Can and Could we don't know if the person has disposition.

II. Specific requests for permission (Social interaction)

May/Might/Can/Could I take a bit of that? (Could and Might are more polite)

- Notice how the meaning of the answer changes

Yes, I could. Yes, you might. (It implies no)

Yes, I can. Yes, you may. (It implies yes)

So, the present tense forms (will, can, may) need to be used if the answer is a definite yes.

III. Inferences (Logical probability)

Modals can be used to express possibilities or to mention how certain/sure you are about something.

What do you think is making that noise outside?

- *It could/might be some students. (low certainty)*
- *It may be some students. (Still low certainty but it has increased a little bit)*
- *It should be some students (You are more certain)*
- *It will be some students (Certainty is high= you are sure)*
- *It must be some students (You're absolutely sure)*

IV. Encouraging action/ Giving advice (Social interaction)

(The person is feeling bad) *What should I do?*

- *You might/could get your knee checked by a doctor. (Less urgent)*
- *You should get your knee checked by a doctor. (It is a piece of advice that is a little bit strong)*
- *You must/have to/have got to get your knee checked by a doctor. (Strong advice/necessity)/necessity)*
- *You will get your knee checked by a doctor. (No choice = It's an obligation)*

There are other usages of modals

- Ability: *Can/could/be able* These modals are associated with animate things.
Cats can see in the darkness.
- Desire: *Would like to*
I'd like some tea, please.
- Offer: *Would you like?*
Would you like some coffee?
- Preference: *Would rather?*
She'd rather die than give a speech.
- Shall: Used also for lawyers and in justice documents only in 1st and 3rd person.
Lessee shall sell the remaining oil . . .
In other words: *Lessee [an actor capable of carrying out an obligation] shall [has a duty to] sell the remaining oil . . .*

Modal	Periphrastic Modals
Can/Could	Be able to
Will	Be going to / be about to
Must	Have to / Have got to
Should	Be supposed to /ought to
Would	Used to
May	Be allowed to (permission)

Remember that periphrastic modals are semimodals that are followed by the preposition "to".