

# MODALS

Modal verbs are used with main verbs to describe varied moods and meanings, such as permission, necessity, possibility, and certainty.

Modal verbs are always used with main verbs, as they cannot stand on their own unless used in a question tag.

- I could this work tonight.
- I could do this work tonight.

Modal verbs always stay in their base form.

- She can sing.
- They can sing.

Could, should, and might are used in the past tense or to be polite.

- Can she sing?
- They could have reached a little early./Could you pick that up for me?

# Functions of Modals

## Will

- To show promise, intention, willingness, determination with the first person (I, we)  
Examples: *I will give you a book of your choice.* (promise).  
*We will help them out.* (willingness).  
*The new MD will change the system of appraisals in our organisation.* (determination).
- To express request, invitation, insistence, assumption, characteristic, or habit.

Examples: *Will you please help me write this essay?* (request)

*Mrs Smith will be in the library during school hours.* (assumption)

*The crocodile will usually kill other small sea animals.* (characteristic, habit)

- Negative form of will: will not  
Examples: *I will not spend my pocket money.*  
*She won't eat street food*

## Would (past form of will)

- Would expresses the past form of will.  
Examples: *Shalini informed me that she would dance at my wedding.*  
*The problem was how he would reach there.*
- To express past habits.  
Examples: *He would drink a cup of green tea every morning.*  
*My father would get up early in the morning.*
- For requests  
Examples: *Would you please give me your bike?*  
*Would you like to spend this evening with me?*

- To express a wish.  
Examples: *I wish she would be healthy.*  
*You would be an engineer.*
- To express an imaginary condition.  
Example: *I would have a solitaire if I earned 1 lakh every month.*
- Negative form of would: wouldn't  
Example: *She would not get up early in the morning.*

## Shall

- Shall is usually used to ask for a suggestion, request, advice with the first person in the interrogative sentence.  
Examples: *Shall we begin the lecture?* (advice)  
*Shall I have a cup of coffee from the new shop?* (request)  
*Shall we get our book published?* (suggestion)
- In the second and third person to indicate threat, warning, command, promise, assurance, and determination.

Examples: *If you behave badly, you shall be punished.* (threat)

*You shall go straight home now.* (command)

*She shall get a new phone on her birthday.* (promise)

- Negative form of shall: shall not/shan't  
Examples: *She shall not come to school tomorrow.*  
*My advice on this matter shan't be dismissed.*

## Should (past form of shall)

Should is used in the following cases:

- To express duty or obligation.  
Examples: *I should help my friends.* (duty)  
*Grade 10 students should be sincere.* (obligation)
- To express opinion.  
Example: *They should be on their flight to Bangkok.*
- To give or take advice or suggestion.  
Example: *We should go to the bank first.*

- After 'lest' when someone expresses fear.  
Example: *Don't wear these shoes lest you should fall down.*
- Negative form of should : should not /shouldn't  
Examples: *You should not come to me with such excuses every single day.*  
*You shouldn't make a noise here.*

## Can

The modal verb 'can' is used when we want:

- To express an ability, capability, capacity, or power  
Examples: *Mohit can easily lift 60 kg. (ability)*  
*She can clear the MBA examination this year. (capability)*  
*Can you understand the English language? (capacity)*  
*Only manager can grant you such a long leave. (power)*

## Could (past form of can)

Could is used widely in situations of the following kinds:

- To express ability/talent in the past.  
Example: *They could win the game last month.*
- To express polite request.  
Example: *Could I ride on your bike with you some day?*

## May

May is a modal which is used in the following situations:

- To show possibility or probability.  
Example: *The auditor may come to the office today.*
- To give or take permission.  
Example: *May I get another sheet of paper?*
- To wish or pray.  
Example: *May you get well soon!*

## Might (Past form of may)

Might can be used tentatively to ask permission or to express a polite request. It can also be used in the following cases:

- To express less possibility.  
Example: *Heeru might help us if she is free.*
- For seeking permission.  
Example: *Might I begin to reveal the truth in front of everyone?*

## Must

Must refers to an opinion about something that is not very logical or likely. It can also be used in the following situations:

- To express necessity or obligation.  
Example: *You must take part in the competition.*
- To indicate assumption or conclusion.  
Examples: *She must be here in the evening.*  
*Mr AK Gupta must be a good teacher.*

- To show possibility.

Example: *I can go there.*

- To take or give permission.

Example: *Can I sit here?*

- Negative form of can : cannot /can't

Examples: *She can't run fast.*

*I cannot speak against you.*

- Negative form of could: could not/ couldn't

Examples: *Could you not smoke outside the house?*

*She couldn't cook delicious food.*

- To show a purpose.

Example: *Gaurav is joining a new company so that he may fulfil his career goals.*

- Negative form of may: may not/ mayn't

Examples: *It may not rain today.*

*She mayn't attend the meeting.*

- To express a guess.

Example: *That might be Rahul's call.*

- Negative form of might: might not/ mightn't

Examples: *It might not rain today as the sky is clear.*

*She mightn't talk to me this evening.*

- In case of prohibition.

Example: *You must not bunk school.*

- Negative form of must : must not/ mustn't

Examples: *You must not get drenched in the rains.*  
*You mustn't make a fuss over this.*

## Have to/ Had to

- Have or Had to is used to express obligation or compulsion (while talking about rules, laws).

Examples: *I have to reach school early.*

*They had to follow the instruction manual to assemble their baby's car seat.*

- Negative form of have to: don't/doesn't have to

Examples: *I don't have to cook all this food at home, do I?*

*She doesn't have to work till late in the office.*

## Ought to

Ought to is used to indicate the correctness of one's actions or behaviour. It can be used;

- To express moral obligation or duty.

Example: *You ought to do something for the poor and needy.*

*We ought to speak the truth.*

- To give advice.

Example: *You ought to study hard to achieve success.*

- Negative form of ought to : ought not / oughtn't to

Examples: *You ought not to hate your neighbours.*

*You oughtn't insult your elders.*

## Use of 'Need', 'Need to', 'Dare' and 'Used to'

Need and dare are considered semi-modals because they can be used either as modal auxiliaries or as main verbs.

### Need/Need to

- As a modal auxiliary verb in negative terms, it indicates absence of obligation. It expresses the speaker's authority or advice and is used for the present and the future.

Example: *You needn't write this email today.*

- The interrogative is formed by inversion.

Example: *Need I speak to my supervisor now?*

- Its past form is 'needed to' in the affirmative sentence, 'need not have' in the negative, and 'need have' in the interrogative.

Examples: *Need I have gone to her? (interrogative in the past)*

*I needed to go to her. (affirmative in the past)*

*You needn't have gone to meet her. (negative in the past)*

*You need to go to the barber now, look at your hair! (affirmative in the future)*

### Dare

- As a modal auxiliary, dare refers to being bold and courageous.

Example: *She 'dare' do that. (affirmative)*

- Its negative is formed by 'dare not' and the interrogative by inversion.

Examples: *I dare not disturb my father when he is asleep. (negative)*

*Dare we talk to them at this hour? (interrogative)*

### Used to

Used to can be used in the following situations:

- For a discontinued habit or a past situation which is no more in the present.

Example: *He used to drink tea daily. (Now he does not drink tea daily).*

- For something existing in the past.

Example: *This used to be a dense jungle before.*