

MODALS

Can is used a lot in daily English and even in formal writings. It has many functions. Now, look at the table.

To give or ask for permission	Can I put my cloth on your bed?
to talk about abilities	She can speak Spanish.
To request something informally	Can you order us pizza.
To talk about possibilities	Take your umbrella with yourself! It can be rainy outside.

Could is the past tense of 'can,' but it is not always talking about the past. Look at the chart below:

To talk about past abilities	I could swim back then.
To make a polite request	Could you please close the window?
To talk about possibilities in past	Even now, I cannot believe us. It could be dangerous to be there.
To talk about hypothetical possibilities	I could have been a Doctor by now if I studied more.

When it comes to expressing your ability, you can not always talk in present simple and past simple tenses, So, there must be an alternative for them in other tenses such as present perfect. In this case, you use **be able to**.

'**May**' and '**might**' are used widely in English to talk about *possibilities* and to politely ask or give permission. The only difference between 'may' and 'might' is that "may" can be used to express wishes, while "might" cannot. Remember 'might' cannot be used to *give permission*.

	may	might
possibility	It may rain today.	It might rain today.
ask permission	May I stand here?	Might I open your bag?
give permission	You may use my car if yours is broken.
express wishes	May this special day give you countless fond memories.

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'Will' and 'would' are commonly used in English. they have many functions that are explained as follows.

	Will
predicting the future	You will become a doctor.
expressing plans and decisions	I will travel to Japan.
asking somebody to do something	Will you close the door?
inviting somebody to do something	Will you come for dinner?
making offers or suggestions	Will you stop being too pessimists?
ordering somebody to do something	You will study your lessons!
promising to do something in the future	I will send the e-mails.
	would
the past tense of will	They didn't say it would take this long.
the imaginary future (type 2 and 3 conditionals)	If I were you I would get divorced.
regular and typical activity in the past	My mother would bake a cake every night back then.
expressing refusals in the past	He wouldn't talk to her unless she calls first.
politely offering or making requests	Would you like a cup of tea?

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'**Shall**' and '**Should**' are used as modal verbs. They have many functions. So, let us take a look at some more examples to be clarified.

	Shall
Predicting the future	They shall get married.
Showing determination	The students shall be there in time.
Making suggestions	Shall we go to Becan Hills?
Making promises or offers	I shall be there for you.
	Should
Giving advice, suggestion or recommendation	You should drink some soup to get better.
Predicting future and talking about expectations	The road should be covered by snow as it was snowing all night.
Expressing an order or instruction	You should mix the eggs after whipping the cream.
Advising not to do something	you shouldn't smoke, it is harmful.

'**Have to**' and '**must**' is used to express obligations. They have many other functions. We can learn them sooner by examples.

	must
expressing rules or laws	You must speak to the secretary first.
expressing something likely or logical	He must be sleeping now, he works 18 hours per day.
making suggestions and recommendations	You must try the turkey sandwich.
	Have to
necessity and obligation	You have to pay your own bills.
giving advice or recommendation	They have to be patient to get the job.
certainty	It has to be Mark. I remember he had these ocean blue eyes when he was younger.
an annoying event	I wonder why it has to always be me who is in charge of everything.

MODALS

What Are 'Modals'?

'**Modals**' (also called **modal verbs** or **modal auxiliary verbs**) are special verbs that follow the main verb and modify its meaning and function in a sentence. Modals serve a wide variety of **communicative** functions, such as expressing [probability](#), [ability](#), [obligation](#), [willingness](#), and [habits](#), as well as giving [advice](#) and [permission](#).

Modal Verbs in English

The following is a list of **modal verbs** in English:

1. [Can](#)
2. [Could](#)
3. [Shall](#)
4. [Should](#)
5. [Will](#)
6. [Would](#)
7. [May](#)
8. [Might](#)
9. [Must](#)

It's important to note that modal verbs do not have a tense division like regular verbs. This means that some modal verbs can be used in **both** past and present forms.

Conjugation

Modal verbs only have **one form**, which is the **base form** of the verb, and they do not change to indicate tense, aspect, or agreement with the subject. This means that modal verbs are not affected by the rules of adding -s, -ing, or -ed, which are used for conjugating main verbs in English. Examples:

Can They Stand Alone?

Modal verbs do not function as the main verb of a sentence, and they require another verb to complete the meaning of a sentence. The rule for using modal verbs is to add the **base form** of the main verb after the modal verb to create a complete verb phrase. For example:

Negation

To create the **negative form** of a modal verb, you can simply add '**not**' after the modal verb.

The modal verb '**can**', has two negative forms, one is **can not** and the other is **cannot** which is used as a single term in *formal* writings.

However, the use of **shan't**, which is the contracted form of '*shall not*' is not common in informal and daily spoken English.

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Warning

Do not use phrases like 'I think' or 'I believe' with the negative form of 'should'. To make such sentences negative, 'think' or 'believe' are used in the negative form, and 'should' is kept as it is. Pay attention to the example:

e.g. I don't think you should eat too many candies. (NOT I think you shouldn't eat too many candies.)

Forming Questions

When forming a question using a modal verb, the modal verb is placed at the beginning of the [sentence](#).

In [wh- questions](#), an interrogative word such as 'what', 'where', 'when', 'why', 'who', or 'how' is placed at the beginning of the sentence followed by the modal verb and the subject.

Forming Tag Questions

Modal verbs can also appear in [tag questions](#). Tag questions using modal verbs are formed without the main verb being expressed, such as "Can he?" or "Would they?"

In general, if the main sentence is affirmative, the modal in the tag question must be negative, and if the main sentence is negative, the tag question must be affirmative.

Punctuation in Tag Questions

There must be a **comma** before tag questions.

You won't ever leave me will you? **Are Modal Verbs Different from Auxiliary Verbs?**

Modals are a **special kind** of [auxiliary verbs](#). That is why they are also called **modal auxiliary verbs**.

	modal verbs	auxiliary verbs
can indicate tense/voice	X	✓
can be conjugated	X	✓
can be inverted/negative	✓	✓
can be used more than once	X	✓

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