

# Modal verbs

Modal verbs do not follow the pattern of normal verbs. They have no past or future and they do not take 's' for the third person singular:

She can sing

She cans sing (X).

# Modal verbs

When speaking in the past or future, we tend to use another verb with a similar meaning. For example: “She must leave” becomes “she had to leave” in the past tense and “she will have to leave” in the future.

# Modal verbs

It is also possible to follow the modal with have in order to change the tense. Thus, “I should eat some lunch” becomes “I should have eaten some lunch”. Note that in this case, the following verb is in the **past participle**.

# Modal verbs

**Can** and **could** act as pair modals, thus a statement using can in the present becomes could in the past.

I can't find my wallet

I couldn't find my wallet.

# Modal verbs

All modals form their negative by adding **not**.

I shouldn't eat chocolate

I don't should eat chocolat (X)

# Modal verbs

Also, all modals are followed by the base form of a verb without 'to'.

I could dance

I could to dance. (X)

# Modal verbs

Modals are used in forming **question tags**. They are also used in forming short answers to question tags. In this case, the modal is always the same.

You can't pass me the salt, can you?

Yes I can.

You wouldn't let me down, would you?

No I wouldn't.

# Modal verbs

Obligation,  
prohibition



# Modal verbs

## Obligation, prohibition

### obligation

## Must / have to

- You must bring your ID
- We have to take an exam
- She must get a good mark if she wants to pass
- Javier has to finish his homework

# Modal verbs

## Obligation, prohibition

obligation

No obligation

## Don't have to / needn't

- You needn't bring your ID
- We don't have to take an exam
- She doesn't have to get a good mark in order to pass
- Javier needn't come to the presentation today

# Modal verbs

**Obligation,  
prohibition**

**Ability  
permission**

**Speculation  
deduction**

**obligation**

**No obligation**

**recommendation**

**Ought to / should / must**

- You should take your umbrella
- Jane ought to be more considerate to Mark
- They musn't get up late tomorrow
- You must read that book

# Modal verbs

**Obligation,  
prohibition**

**Ability  
permission**

**Speculation  
deduction**

**obligation**

**No obligation**

**recommendation**

**prohibition**

**Mustn't / can't**

- You mustn't drink and drive
- She can't use the computer for the next few days.

# Modal verbs

**Obligation,  
prohibition**

**Ability  
permission**

**Speculation  
deduction**

**can**

- I can surf
- She can surf really well

**Ability present**

**Ability past**

**Ask permission**

**Express  
permission**

# Modal verbs

**Obligation,  
prohibition**

**Ability  
permission**

**Speculation  
deduction**

**could**

- Back when I was in college, I could run 100 mts in 11 seconds
- I couldn't ride a bike until I was 12.

**Ability present**

**Ability past**

**Ask permission**

**Express  
permission**

# Modal verbs

**Obligation,  
prohibition**

**Ability  
permission**

**Speculation  
deduction**

## Can / could / may

- Can I go to the bathroom?
- Could you pass the salt, please?
- May we get a brochure?

**Ability present**

**Ability past**

**Ask permission**

**Express  
permission**

# Modal verbs

**Obligation,  
prohibition**

**Ability  
permission**

**Speculation  
deduction**

## Can / could

- You can drop by later if you like.
- Some of you could stay out until late when you were really young.

**Ability present**

**Ability past**

**Ask permission**

**Express  
permission**



# Modal verbs

**Obligation,  
prohibition**

**Ability  
permission**

**Speculation  
deduction**

**May / might / could**

- He may have lost the bus
- We might go to the cinema after we finish cleaning up.
- She could pass the exam if she studied a bit harder
- They might not come after all

**speculation**

**Negative  
deduction**

**Affirmative  
deduction**

# Modal verbs

**Obligation,  
prohibition**

**Ability  
permission**

**Speculation  
deduction**

**Can't**

- It can't be your sister driving that car, I saw her taking the bus.
- It can't go on raining like this forever.

**speculation**

**Negative  
deduction**

**Affirmative  
deduction**

# Modal verbs

**Obligation,  
prohibition**

**Ability  
permission**

**Speculation  
deduction**

**must**

- He must have told her already, she seems quite cheered up.
- The concert must be over, the audience is beginning to leave.

**speculation**

**Negative  
deduction**

**Affirmative  
deduction**

# Modal verbs

## AGONY AUNT

I think he is back on drugs

I'm 17 years old and have been with my 22-year-old boyfriend for around 6 months. We have always had a good time together and have always got on really well up until a few weeks ago when he started to act a little strangely.

Over the past few weeks he's been disappearing for a few days and no one has been able to contact him and when he has been around he's been really paranoid and has been acting irrationally about everything.

Up until a year ago my boyfriend was a cocaine addict but claims that he would never take drugs again because of the amount of things he lost when he was on the drugs, but with the way that he's acting it makes me think that maybe he is back on cocaine. I really don't know what to do because I love him so much and don't want to lose him but if he is taking drugs again I don't think that it would be a good idea to stay with him.

# Modal verbs

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7gMnYKzJkik>

<http://www.better-english.com/grammar/cancould.htm>

<http://www.nohomers.net/content/fun/quiz/>

# Modal verbs

Donuts. Is there anything they \_\_\_\_\_  
do?

# Modal verbs

Donuts. Is there anything they can't do?

# Modal verbs

God \_\_\_\_\_ be EVERYWHERE, right?  
(Homer as ADAM)



# Modal verbs

God cannot be EVERYWHERE, right?

# Modal verbs

If something goes wrong at the plant,  
blame the guy who can't \_\_\_\_\_

# Modal verbs

If something goes wrong at the plant,  
blame the guy who can't speak English

# Modal verbs

I don't apologize. I am \_\_\_\_\_ Lisa, that's the way I am.

# Modal verbs

I don't apologize. I am sorry Lisa, that's the way I am.

# Modal verbs

Beer. Now there's a temporary \_\_\_\_\_.

# Modal verbs

Beer. Now there's a temporary solution.

# Modal verbs

And how is education supposed to make me feel smarter? Besides, every time I learn something new, it pushes some old stuff out of my brain. Remember when I took that home winemaking course, and I forgot how to \_\_\_\_\_?



# Modal verbs

And how is education supposed to make me feel smarter? Besides, every time I learn something new, it pushes some old stuff out of my brain. Remember when I took that home winemaking course, and I forgot how to drive?



# Modal verbs

All right, brain. You don't like me and I don't like you, but let's just do this and I can get back to killing you with beer.

# Modal verbs

Ah, beer, my one weakness. My Achilles heel, if you \_\_\_\_\_.

# Modal verbs

Ah, beer, my one weakness. My Achilles' heel, if you will.