

MODAL VERBS

Modal verbs go before main verbs.

There are ten modal verbs:

can could would ought to shall

must should might may will

I **should** **learn** a great deal this lesson.

Modal verbs are used for showing:

a) **ABILITY** - Whether someone is able to do something:

Fred **can** **speak** Spanish fluently.

b) **LIKELIHOOD** - How likely something is:

Janet is eating black pudding. She **must** **be** very hungry.

c) **OBLIGATION** - Advice/obligation

You **should finish** reading your book by Monday.

d) **PERMISSION** - Whether someone is allowed to do something

“**May** I **go** to the toilet in the middle of this exciting English lesson?”

e) **HABIT** - What someone usually does

Whatever **will be** will be.

Spot the modal verbs:

Customer: Could I please have a carrier bag?

Shop Assistant: You really should use your own to help preserve the environment.

Customer: I must try harder to remember.

Shop Assistant: I can offer you a cardboard box for free.

Customer: No thank you, I might catch the bus and it would be too difficult to carry.

Shop Assistant: Sorry, I must charge you ten pence.

Customer: Could I please have a carrier bag?

Shop Assistant: You really should use your own to help preserve the environment.

Customer: I must try harder to remember.

Shop Assistant: I can offer you a cardboard box for free.

Customer: No thank you, I might catch the bus and it would be too difficult to carry.

Shop Assistant: Sorry, I must charge you ten pence.

You can make modal verbs negative:

I must wash up the dishes,

I mustn't leave my room in a complete mess.

I could eat a large bar of chocolate.

I couldn't eat a Vindaloo curry – it is too hot.

Make the modal verb negative in each of these sentences:

- a) He will stay in at break.
- b) You might catch a cold.
- c) They can go first.
- d) You may turn off the TV.
- e) I should be running.
- f) You really could be neater.
- g) You might be lucky.
- h) Who would believe that?

- a) He **will not (won't)** stay in at break.
- b) You **might not** catch a cold.
- c) They **cannot** go first.
- d) You **may not** turn off the TV.
- e) I **should not** be running.
- f) You really **could not** be neater.
- g) You **might not** be lucky.
- h) Who **would not** believe that?

Put the right modal verbs into these sentences:

1. He swims really well. He _____ practise a lot.
2. It was so dark I _____ see the path.
3. He's brilliant. He _____ even juggle with his eyes closed!
4. If she keeps practising, she _____ just make the team.
5. He is just not sure. He _____ make his mind up.
6. You _____ spread gossip.
7. _____ I sit here?
8. Jill has ten hedgehogs. They _____ cost a bomb to feed.
9. Sadly I _____ sing well enough to be in the choir.
10. I tried to eat it, but I _____.

Put the right modal verbs into these sentences:

1. He swims really well. He **must** practise a lot.
2. It was so dark I **couldn't** see the path.
3. He's brilliant. He **can** even juggle with his eyes closed!
4. If she keeps practising, she **might** just make the team.
5. He is just not sure. He **can't** make his mind up.

6. You **mustn't** spread gossip.

7. **May** I sit here?

8. Jill has ten hedgehogs. They **must** cost a bomb to feed.

9. Sadly I **couldn't** sing well enough to be in the choir.

10. I tried to eat it, but I **couldn't**.

Modal verbs used with the verb *to have*.

When modal verbs are used with the verb *to have*, there can be confusion.

- can have
- would have
- ought to have
- could have
- shall have
- must have
- should have
- might have
- may have
- will have

Some of these can be abbreviated e.g. would've.

It can be easy (in the Lancashire accent) to think this is would of.

This common error occurs because the writer has forgotten that modal verbs **MUST** work alongside a main verb.

OF is **not** a **verb**. **HAVE** is the **verb**.

REMEMBER

- would've = would have
- could've = could have
- must've = must have
- should've = should have
- might've = might have