



MODAL VERBS

Introduction to Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are special helping verbs that give more meaning to the main verb in a sentence. They are used to express **ability**, **possibility**, **permission**, **advice**, **necessity**, and more. The most common modal verbs are:

- can
- could
- may
- might
- must
- shall
- should
- will
- would



Why Modal Verbs Are Important

Modal verbs help us express different **attitudes** about actions. They are used to talk about:

- Ability: What we can or cannot do.
- Possibility: What might or might not happen.
- Necessity: What we must or must not do.
- **Permission**: Asking for or giving **permission**.
- **Advice**: Giving recommendations with words like **should** and **ought to**.
- **Politeness**: Using modals to sound more polite or formal, such as **could** or **would** when asking for something.

Key Features of Modal Verbs

- **No "s" for third-person singular**: Unlike regular verbs, modal verbs don't change in the third person (he, she, it). For example, we say, "He **can** swim," not "He **cans** swim."
- **Followed by the base form of the verb**: Modal verbs are always followed by the base form of the main verb. For example, "You **should study**," not "You should **studying**."
- **No past form**: Most modal verbs don't have past forms. However, some like **could** or **would** can refer to the past.

Modal Verbs and Politeness

Modal verbs are also very important for making polite requests or offers. For example:

- Can you help me? (informal)
- Could you help me? (polite)
- Would you mind helping me? (very polite)

The use of **could** and **would** soften the request and make it sound friendlier or more formal.

Expressing Uncertainty or Possibility

Modal verbs are great for talking about things we are **not sure** about or things that are **possible**, but not certain. For example:

- **Might**: "It **might** rain tomorrow." (Possibility, but not sure)
- **Could**: "That **could** be the answer." (A chance, but not certain)

Giving Advice or Recommendations

Modal verbs like **should** and **ought to** are used to give advice or make recommendations. For example:

- **Should**: "You **should** go to the doctor." (Good advice)
- **Ought to**: "You **ought to** apologize." (Strong recommendation)

Common Modal Verbs and Their Uses

- **Can**: Expresses ability or possibility: "I **can** play the guitar."
- **Could**: Shows past ability or polite requests: "She **could** swim when she was young."
- **May**: Gives permission or expresses possibility: "You **may** leave early today."
- **Might**: Expresses possibility: "He **might** join us later."
- **Must**: Indicates necessity or strong advice: "You **must** wear a helmet."
- **Should**: Gives advice: "You **should** rest if you're sick."
- **Would**: Used in polite requests or imaginary situations: "I **would** help you if I had time."



We use modal verbs to show if we believe something is **certain**, **possible**, or **impossible**:

*I **will** not be here next week.*

*The keys **must** be on the table.*

*You **cannot** be serious.*

They are also used to talk about ability, ask permission, and make requests and offers:

*I **can't** cook.*

***May** I use your cookbook?*

***Could** I have a cup of coffee, please?*

***Would** you like some sugar?*