

TOPIC : MODALS

Modals are a kind of auxiliary verbs. They appear along with the main verb. They can be used in a multiple situations which are as follows-

1. A Modal verb can be used to indicate the chance or possibility of a happening.

For example – It may rain today.

2. Modal verbs can also be used to indicate the ability of the subject.

Here is an example – I can lift heavy weights.

3. Modals can also be used for giving the probability of a happening

Let us see an example – She must have informed the office.

4. Modals can also be used to seek permission

For instance – May I meet the principal?

5. Modals also indicate the necessity for an action

Here is an example – You ought to take care of your health.

The important features of Modals are as follows-

- Modals are types of verbs.
- They can be used only in the helping form.
- They cannot be used as the main verb in a sentence.
- They do not have ‘-ing’ or ‘-ed’ forms.
- Modals do not change forms according to the number and person of the subject.
- They help to express ability, possibility, necessity, permission and obligation.

Let us see the most important modal verbs and their uses-

could	shall	should	will
can	may	might	ought to
would	need		

Modals to express possibility or ability: can, could, be able to

Can is used to express ability or to state that something is possible.

- He can swim across the river very fast. (ability)
 - Rita can come here in the evening if she is free. (possibility)
- Can has only two forms- can (present) and could (past).

- I can make delicious fruit salad. (present)
- I could dance well in my childhood. (past)

But (be) able to can be used in all tenses.

- He is able to speak French. (He can speak French)
- I will not be able to accompany you to the market today.

Could also suggests general ability in the past or permission to do something, was able to suggests ability in a particular situation.

- When I was a little girl, I could easily climb trees: (general ability)
- I could watch the play because I had booked my tickets earlier. (general ability)
- She was able to get into the bus because it was not overcrowded. (in a particular situation)
- The boy could paint well and he had won many prizes in the past.

Modals used to ask for permission or something – can, could, may, would

To ask for things, we generally use can or could.

- Can I borrow your pen?
- Can I read your book, please?
- Could you make a cup of tea, please?

- Could you bake a cake for me, please?
- Rohan to his colleague, “May I drive your car today?”
- Doctor to the nurse, “May I have the patient’s blood report?”
- Would you get me a notebook, please?

- **Modals used to indicate possibility – May, might, could**

Both may and might are used to suggest possibility. But might suggests a weaker possibility than may. Could suggests a very weak possibility, may suggests a good possibility and might suggests a weak possibility.

- She could be in the garden.
- He might work from home.
- My parents may come home tomorrow.

May be, might be, may have, might have

- Rohan said, “Reena may be in her study.”
- Rita said, “Rashi might be in the playground.”
- Mohan said, “Suresh may have left the house for the office.”
- Preeti said, “Sagar might have changed his plans to go out.”

Modals to indicate necessity or compulsion- must have to, have got to, had to, had got to

We use have to and must to say that it is necessary to do something. Sometimes, we can use either of them.

- You must study sincerely if you want to score good marks.
- You have to study sincerely if you want to do well.

Have to is used to suggest some kind of compulsion or there is some rule which has to be followed or the situation requires it.

- You must spend time with your children. (I want you to do that.)
 - We have to sign the register when we enter this building (That’s the rule.)
 - I can’t jog for too long, so I have to take a break. (The situation demands that I take a break.)
- Must doesn’t have a past tense form. So, we can use must to talk about the present or the future.
- We must attend the meeting now. (present)
 - We must attend the meeting tomorrow. (future)

Modals for suggestion, advice, duty (obligation) – should, ought to

We use should to make a suggestion or to give advice.

Should is not as strong as must or have to. Look at these examples:

- You should exercise every day. (It’s the right advice for you.)
 - We must carry the driving license while driving any vehicle. (It is an advice for you.)
 - You have to drink a lot of water during summer to avoid dehydration. (it is compulsory).
- Ought to conveys that it would be the right thing to do with a greater sense of responsibility and as a moral duty
- You ought to look after your grandparents.
- You ought to pay the taxes on time.
 - Ought to also suggests that it is the right thing to do. Nowadays both should and ought to are used to convey the same idea.

Modals to indicate promise – will, shall

Will and shall are used to convey some kind of promise or assurance. Will with I and we, and shall with other subjects suggest promise:

- We will join you for dinner. (promise)
- You shall be provided with all the modern facilities in this apartment. (assurance)

However, these days we generally use will with all subjects to refer to future time. But will with I and we is not enough to suggest a promise. We should say:

- I promise, I’ll
- We assure you, we will....

Modals for Absence Of Necessity- Needn’t Have, Didn’t Need To

- You needn’t have brought your car. (You have brought your car but actually there was no need to bring it.)
- She didn’t need to bring her car. (She didn’t bring her car because she thought there was no need to bring it.)

Modals to indicate a Wish- may

May is generally used to express a wish:

- May you be blessed with good health!
- May you be blessed with all the happiness!

Modals to indicate inability – dare

- I dare not go into a dense forest at night.
- Dare you enter an old, deserted palace all alone?
- I daren't challenge the boxer to fight with me.

Dare means to be afraid to do something that requires courage.

Exercise on Modals for Class 9 (Practice Questions)

A. Choose the correct modal:

- B. You _____ finish your homework before going out.
a) can
b) must
c) might
- C. She _____ be in the garden; I just saw her there.
a) must
b) might
c) can
- D. _____ I use your phone for a minute?
a) Must
b) May
c) Should
- E. We _____ reach early if we want good seats.
a) should
b) may
c) can
- F. He _____ swim when he was five years old.
a) can
b) could
c) must
- G. You _____ smoke here; it's not allowed.
a) don't have to
b) mustn't
c) can
- H. They _____ come to the party if they are free.
a) must
b) might
c) should
- I. _____ you help me carry these bags?
a) Must
b) Could
c) May

B. Choose the correct option in brackets:

1. You (must / might) wear a seatbelt while driving.
2. She (can / must) play the guitar very well.
3. We (should / mustn't) respect our parents.

4. He (may / must) be tired after the long journey.
5. You (don't have to / mustn't) bring snacks; we already have some.
6. I (can / could) run fast when I was younger.
7. They (might / must) visit us tomorrow; they are not sure yet.
8. You (should / can't) talk loudly in the library.

C. Pick the correct sentence:

1. a) You must to finish your work.
b) You must finish your work.
2. a) She can sings very well.
b) She can sing very well.
3. a) May I to come in?
b) May I come in?
4. a) He might be at home.
b) He might is at home.
5. a) You shouldn't waste water.
b) You shouldn't to waste water.

A (MCQs)

1. b) must
2. a) must
3. b) May
4. a) should
5. b) could
6. b) mustn't
7. b) might
8. b) Could

B

1. must
2. can
3. should
4. may
5. don't have to
6. could
7. might
8. shouldn't (*more natural than "can't" for advice*)

C

1. b
2. b
3. b
4. a
5. a