

modal verbs

1. Can		can't	
2. could		couldn't	
3. may			(not usual)
4. might			
5. shall			(not used in Am E)
6. should			
7. will / 'll		+ not =	
8. would / 'd			
9. must			
10. ought to			
11. used to *			
12. need *			
13. dare *			

*Can be modal verbs or lexical verbs.

E.g. He needn't go (M.V.)

He doesn't need to go (L.V.)

In general:

1. Followed by infinitive without **to**. E.g. He can \emptyset swim.
2. No **-ed**, **-s** (3rd persona sing), **-ing**. E.g. She must \emptyset study.
3. No **do**, **does**, **did** to make **questions or negations**. E.g. Will you come? / You shouldn't smoke.
4. Used to talk about: permission, obligation, possibility, probability, prediction, intention...
5. Can be used with perfect infinitive (**have + participle**) to talk about the past (expressing regrets). E.g. You could have told me you were coming.

can

Ability = be able to

E.g. He can speak English but he can't write it very well.

Permission = be allowed to = (may, + formal)

E.g. Can (or may) I smoke in here?

Theoretical possibility = (may, factual possibility)

E.g. Anybody can make mistakes.

Requests:

E.g. Can you open the window, please?

could

Past ability:

E.g. I never could play the banjo.

Present or future permission:

E.g. Could I smoke in here?

Present possibility (theoretical or factual):

E.g. We could go to the concert.

Unreal conditions (2nd conditional):

E.g. If we had more money, we could buy a car.

Requests:

Could you open the window, please?

may

Permission (+ formal tahn can):

E.g. You may borrow my car if you like.

BUT: Negative permission = prohibition: **mustn't**

E.g. You mustn't borrow my car.

Possibility (usually factual):

E.g. The road may be blocked.

might (There's no important difference between may and might)

Permission (rare):

E.g. Might I smoke in here?

Possibility (theoretical or factual):

E.g. We might go to the concert.

shall

Intention (1st person):

E.g. I shan't be long.

Suggestion:

E.g. Shall we go to the cinema?

Offers:

E.g. Shall I help you? Shall I carry your suitcase?

should

Obligation (advice):

E.g. You should do as he says

After certain expressions:

It's a pity that	} (e.g.) you <u>should</u> say this to me.
I'm surprised that	
I'm sorry that	
It's odd that	

will

Willingness:

E.g. He'll help you if you ask him.

Polite requests:

E.g. Will you please open the window?

Intention (usually 1st person) (spontaneous, at the moment of speaking):

E.g. I'll write as soon as I can.

Prediction:

E.g. It will rain tomorrow.

Offers:

E.g. I ll help you.

would

Would = used to:

E.g. Every morning, he would go for a walk.

2nd conditional:

E.g. If I didn't stop him, he would smoke too much.

Invitation:

Would you like tea or would you rather have coffe?

Would rather = prefer:

E.g. I d rather have coffe.

I d rather not say.

Requests:

Would you do me a favour, please?

must

Obligation (past = had to):

E.g. You must be back by 10 o'clock.

Prohibition or no necessary:

Needn't, don't have to:

E.g. You needn't be back by 10 o'clock.

Mustn't:

E.g. You mustn't smoke in here.

Deduction (negative: can't):

E.g. There must be a mistake.

There can't be a mistake.

ought to

Obligation (- categorical than must or have to):

E.g. You ought to start at once.

exercise:

Complete these sentences using a modal verb to express deduction, permission, obligation, prediction, etc.

1. He _____ speak 4 languages.
2. I looked everywhere for the book but I _____ find it.
3. You've been travelling all day. You _____ be tired.
4. Where's Tom? - I don't know. He _____ be in his office.
5. _____ we go to the cinema tonight? - Sorry but I _____ rather not.
6. You _____ hurried because the train was late.
7. He's just had dinner. He _____ be hungry again.
8. You _____ stop smoking. That _____ be a good idea.
9. Was she ill? I'm not sure, she _____ been ill.
10. I felt so ill that I _____ go to hospital.
11. You've got plenty of time. You _____ hurry.
12. My grandmother loved music. She _____ play the piano well.
13. _____ I use your phone?
14. You really _____ work harder if you want to pass the "Selectivitat".
15. You _____ smoke if you like.
16. When I woke up this morning, the light was on. I _____ forgotten to turn it off last night.
17. You _____ shout. The baby is asleep.
18. Once in the restaurant, there were no free tables. We _____ reserved one.