

## LEARN YOUR MODAL VERBS



MODAL VERB	USE	EXAMPLES
<b>Present &amp; Future</b>		
can / can't	Present <b>ABILITY</b> Informal permission Informal polite request	Can / can't swim very well You can use my car tomorrow Can I borrow your pen?
be able to	Present <b>ABILITY</b> (formal)	You are able to drive the biggest motorcar.
will/can't be able to	Future <b>ABILITY</b> (I will be able to swim by the end of the course)	(I will be able to use your car holiday)
shall	polite question to make a suggestion	Shall I open the window?
may/might	Formal permission	You may leave the room.
might (not)	Polite request (only with I or we)	Might I borrow your pen?
would (not)	Present & future <b>POSSIBILITY</b>	I may go to the beach next month He might not get to bed
can't	Present logical <b>DUBIUM</b> (think)	It can't be true to go already!
must	Believe or guess something is <b>IMPOSSIBLE</b> (to say something is true (not must))	He must be on holiday / He must be at the gym (can't be)
ought (not) to	Give <b>ADVICE</b> and make recommendations (present)	You ought (not) to exercise it
should (not)	To give very strong <b>ADVICE</b> or make threats (present)	You should (not) exercise it You'd better go or we'll be late
had better (not) do	To give very strong <b>ADVICE</b> or make threats (present)	You'd better not drink any more, or I'll be furious
have to	<b>OBLIGATION</b> (present)	You must be late
must	<b>OBLIGATION</b> (present)	You have to do it every day
mustn't	<b>NO OBLIGATION</b> (present)	You needn't buy any special equipment
don't have to	<b>NO OBLIGATION</b> (present)	She doesn't have to join a gym
need (without do)	Negative and interrogative (present)	I needn't come out / I don't need anything
need to	In affirmative to express necessity	I needn't get fit / I need to get a job (must get a job)
mustn't	<b>PROHIBITION</b>	You mustn't smoke / you mustn't talk shop
must & have to - their meanings are similar in the affirmative. They are completely different in the negative (mustn't/prohibition / don't have to=no obligation)		
<b>Past</b>		
was/were able to	Particular <b>ABILITY</b> in the past (to use someone)	He signed his book, but he was able to continue playing
could	General <b>ABILITY</b> in the past	She could run very fast when she was young
couldn't	General & particular <b>ABILITY</b> in the past	He couldn't walk past his house / I couldn't sleep yesterday
had to	From <b>OBLIGATION</b>	I had to leave three days before the operation
didn't have to	To say that an action was not necessary (past)	I didn't need to/ didn't have to take my swimming costume (it was not necessary for me to take my car)
didn't need to	To say that an action was not necessary (past)	I could/may/might have left my car at the beach
could/may/might	<b>POSSIBILITY</b> in the past	
can't have + Past	<b>IMPOSSIBILITY</b> in the past	He can't have gone to London. I've just seen him.
must have + Past	Certainty or make logical <b>DUBIUM</b> about the past	It's frozen. It must have been very cold recently
should	To give advice or criticism about <b>PAST</b> events	I should have offered
ought to	To give advice or criticism about <b>PAST</b> events	He ought to have left the team
needn't have + Past	To say that an action was not necessary, but it happened anyway	I needn't have taken my swimming costume (I took my car, but I didn't need it)