

Modal Verbs in English
Compiled by Assist. Prof. Tahani Awad Jasim
Dept. of Arabic- 4th. Year Students

Modal Verbs Modal verbs (modals) are verbs that add the meaning of logical possibility, ability, necessity, and permission to verbs, which have a degree of strength from stronger to weaker. Modals come before infinitive verbs and the “to” is removed. Modals do not need to match their subject in plural agreement, so there is no need to add an “-s” or “-es” ending to a modal. Modals will often be seen in sentences that are predicting a future possibility, describing an ability, giving advice, making requests, or asking for permission. The nine most common modals are *can, could, shall, should, will, would, may, might, and must*. Below is a detailed description of these modal verbs.

Use	Modal	Examples
Logical Possibility	Must (Most Certain) Will Would Should May Can Could Might (Least Certain)	The dark clouds must mean rain today. Due to the news, the stock will go down. The chemical would help the experiment. The case should prevent cracking. This change may improve the results. Being careless can have bad consequences. The charm could protect you. I might be tired tomorrow.
Ability	Can (Stronger Ability) Could (Weaker Ability) Shall (Suggestion)	He can type 34 words per minute. I could assist by interpreting the results. Shall we dance?
Necessity	Must (Obligation) Should (Advice)	They must go to work today. You should floss every day.
Permission	May (Most Formal) Might Could Can (Least Formal)	May I turn my paper in tomorrow? Might he have some more soup? Could I buy the new model? Can I go to my friend’s house?

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Activity

Part I: Identify whether the sentence is describing logical possibility, ability, necessity, or permission. Some sentences can be identified as more than one or have multiple uses.

1. You **might** win the lottery, but the chances are low.
2. Alona **can** start a fire in five minutes.
3. Hyunh **should** get braces.
4. **Can** I move out next week?
5. Navya **could** run a mile in 11 minutes.
6. **May** I get my grade tonight?
7. It **could** rain tomorrow.
8. I **can** eat this cotton candy in three seconds.
9. Yang **should** catch his flight tomorrow if he arrives at the airport early.
10. They **must** complete their parts of the assignment, or we **will** fail.

Part II: Fill in the blank with a modal based on the use and degree of strength.

1. Logical Possibility, Most Certain:

The restaurant _____ have digital menus on the tables.

2. Logical Possibility, Least Certain:

The bus _____ be on time today.

3. 13. Necessity, Advice :

Everyone _____ brush their teeth every day.

4. 14. Permission, Most formal:

_____ Inessa and I go to the nurse's office?

5. 15. Ability, Stronger:

We _____ write so quickly.

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6. Permission, Somewhat formal Darius:

_____ I have another cookie after dinner?

7. Ability, Stronger or Somewhat Certain:

I _____ finish my finish my writing test in one hour.

8. Logical Possibility, Less Certain:

It _____ snow in Texas if the weather keeps changing.

9. Necessity, Obligation:

You _____ not text while you drive!

10. Logical Possibility, Somewhat Certain:

The kids _____ have cleaned the house before we get home.