



Modal Verbs

Here's a list of the modal verbs in English:

- **can**
- **could**
- **may**
- **might**
- **will**
- **would**
- **must**
- **shall**
- **should**
- **ought to**

Modals are different from normal verbs:

1. They don't use an 's' for the third person singular.
2. They make questions by inversion ('she can go' becomes 'can she go?').
3. They are followed directly by the infinitive of another verb (without 'to').

Probability

First, they can be used when we want to say how sure we are that something happened / is happening / will happen. We often call these 'modals of deduction' or 'speculation' or 'certainty' or 'probability'.

For example:

- It's snowing, so it **must** be very cold outside.
- I don't know where John is. He **could** have missed the train.
- This bill **can't** be right. £200 for two cups of coffee!



Ability

We use 'can' and 'could' to talk about a skill or ability.

For example:

- She **can** speak six languages.
- My grandfather **could** play golf very well.
- I **can't** drive.

Obligation and Advice

We can use verbs such as 'must' or 'should' to say when something is necessary or unnecessary, or to give advice.

For example:

- Children **must** do their homework.
- We **have to** wear a uniform at work.
- You **should** stop smoking.

Permission

We can use verbs such as 'can', 'could' and 'may' to ask for and give permission. We also use modal verbs to say something is not allowed.

For example:

- **Could** I leave early today, please?
- You **may** not use the car tonight.
- **Can** we swim in the lake?



Habits

We can use 'will' and 'would' to talk about habits or things we usually do, or did in the past.

For example:

- When I lived in Italy, we **would** often eat in the restaurant next to my flat.
- John **will** always be late!