

MODAL VERBS

Modals are those helping verbs, which express the 'mode' or 'manner' of the actions indicated by the main verbs. They express modes such as ability, possibility, probability, permission, obligation, etc.

The most commonly used modals are shall, should, will, would, can, could, may, might, must, have to, ought to, used to, need and dare.

Modals are used to:

- **Ask permission** – may, can, could Examples:
May I come in?
Could I use your pen, please?
- **Make a request** – can, could, would
Example: Could you please give me the doctor's telephone number?
- **Make an offer** _would
Example: would you like some fries with that?
- **Make Conditional sentences** _would
Example: I would wait, if I were you.
- **Express a possibility** – may, might, could Example:
It might rain during the night.
- **Give advice or suggestion** – should
Example: You should wear a helmet while riding your motorbike.
- **Express necessity or compulsion** – must, have to
Examples: We must slow down while driving in front of a school.
I have to submit my project by tomorrow.
- **Express prohibition**
Example: You must not talk loudly in the library.
- **Express a promise or intention** – will, shall Example:
I will mail you my address.
- **Express a wish** – may
Example: May you have a long life!

☞ A modal does not change according to the number or person of the subject.

Examples: He can learn. I can learn. You can learn.
They can learn. We can learn.

☞ A modal is always used with a verb in its basic form. The modal takes the tense while the main verb remains in its dictionary form.

Examples: I can run. I may run.
I could run. I might run.

☞ Modals can be used alone in response to a question.

Examples: Can you sing? I can.
Will you sing? I will.
Will you come? I may / I will.

☞ Modals, when joined with 'not' to form a negative, can be contracted.

Examples: I cannot run. I can't run.
I do not run. I don't run.
I will not run. I won't run.

Exercise: Fill in the blanks by using appropriate modals.

- a. _____ you please tell me the direction to the hotel?
- b. You _____ pay in cash. They do not accept credit cards.
- c. I _____ come home from the office today.
- d. _____ I ask you a question?
- e. You _____ clean your room.
- f. They _____ keep the lights and fans switched off when they are not in use.
- g. We _____ improve the existing education system.
- h. The weather _____ be better tomorrow.
- i. Sara _____ go to see the movie. The reviews are good.
- j. You absolutely _____ be at the airport to receive her.
- k. She _____ take her meals regularly.
- l. You _____ reach home before eleven, she said.
- m. _____ we go for a walk?
- n. The soldiers in the Army _____ wear a uniform.
- o. There is one more point I _____ refer to.
- p. You have worked hard. You _____ pass.
- q. It is very cloudy. It _____ rain.
- r. You _____ be properly dressed when you come to office.
- s. _____ you like to come to the party tomorrow?
- t. People _____ not tell lies.

ANSWER KEY

Exercise:

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j
could	Have to	can't	may	should	could	must	might	should	must

k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t
should	should	can	must	should	should	might	must	would	should