

**ÁREA ACADÉMICA:** LICENCIATURA EN ADMINISTRACION

**TEMA:** VERBOS MODALES

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# MODAL VERBS

## Abstract

The modal verbs include *can, must, may, might, will, would, should*. They are used with other verbs to express ability, obligation, possibility, and so on.

Modal verbs are unlike other verbs. They do not change their form (spelling) and they have no infinitive or participle (past/present). The modals *must* and *can* need substitute verbs to express obligation or ability in the different tenses

Finally, Modals are auxiliary verbs which do not need an additional auxiliary in negatives or questions.

## KEY WORDS:

Modal Verbs, Auxiliaries,



# MODAL VERBS

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PERMISSION, OBLIGATION,  
NECESSITY



# can, must, should, ought to, had better

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The most common modal verbs for talking about permission and obligation are **can/could**, **must**, and **should/ought to**.

I **couldn't** take any photos in the museum, so I bought some postcards.

Passengers on the bus **mustn't** distract the driver.

We **should/ought to** drive home on the motorway – it's much quicker.

We can use **should have** or **ought to have + past participle** to talk about past events which did not happen and which we regret.

We **should have/ought to have** driven home on the motorway – it would have been quicker.

**Had better** is stronger and more urgent than **should/ought to** and is often used to give strong advice or a warning. It normally refers to the immediate future.

You'd **better** post the parcels today or they won't get there in time.

The negative is **had better not** **NOT hadn't better**.

# have to/have got to

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We also use **have to** to express obligations. It can be used in any tense.

All passengers **will have to** fill in a form before landing.

You **don't have to** tip the waitress unless you think the service was especially good.

We can also use **have got to** to express obligation, but it is normally used for specific occasions rather than repeated or general obligations.

**I've got to** buy a birthday present for my brother.

# need

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We use **need/don't need + to + infinitive** to say that something is necessary/unnecessary. You can use these forms for habitual, general, and specific necessity.

You usually **need to** check in at least two hours before a flight leaves.  
I **don't need to** take a raincoat. It's going to be hot today.

When we want to say that something is unnecessary on a specific occasion, we can also use **needn't + infinitive without to**.

You **needn't** lock the car. Nobody will steal it in this village.

We use **don't need to** (~~NOT needn't~~) for habitual or general necessity, e.g. I don't need to wear glasses. My eyesight is still good.

**NOT** ~~I needn't wear glasses.~~

# need

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When something was not necessary, but you did it, we can use either **needn't have + past participle** or **didn't need to + infinitive**.

We **needn't have booked/didn't need to book** a table.

The restaurant is empty!

When something was not necessary so you did not do it, we must use **didn't need to**.

**NOT** ~~We had plenty of petrol so we needn't have stopped, which saved time.~~

We had plenty of petrol so we **didn't need to stop**, which saved time.

# **MORE ABOUT MODAL VERBS**



- Using the modal verbs we may, for example, ask for permission to do something, grant permission to someone, give or receive advice, make or respond to requests and offers, give instructions or orders, express duty or obligation etc.
- Modal verbs can be used to express different levels of politeness.
- We can also use them to express different degrees of probability.

# Primary functions of modal verbs

- Ability
- Permission
- Prohibition
- Prediction
- Duty (escapable obligation)
- Obligation (inescapable)
- Request; Offer
- Possibility
- *Absence of obligation*
- CAN
- MAY (might)/ CAN (could)
- MUSTN'T / CANNOT
- WILL / SHALL / MAY
- SHOULD
- MUST
- CAN / WILL
- CAN / CANNOT
- **NEEDN'T**

## **SECONDARY FUNCTIONS OF MODAL VERBS**

IN THEIR SECONDARY FUNCTION, THE MODAL VERBS (EXCEPT SHALL) CAN BE USED TO EXPRESS THE DEGREE OF CERTAINTY/UNCERTAINTY OR PROBABILITY.

**ALMOST CERTAIN**



**VERY UNCERTAIN**

- **MUST**
- **WILL**
- **WOULD**
- **OUGHT TO**
- **SHOULD**
- **CAN**
- **COULD**
- **MAY**
- **MIGHT**

## SOME IMPORTANT GRAMMAR ASPECTS

The **negative** is formed by the addition of **not** after the modal. In informal spoken English **not** is often reduced to **n't**. Modals in **affirmative** do not have contracted forms (except for **will** and **would**: I'll, I'd).

In **questions**, the modal verbs behave like the auxiliary verbs: **do, have** or **be**.

Only one modal verb can be used in a single verb phrase.

**Tenses**: all modals can refer to the immediate present or the future, therefore 'present' is not always a reliable label ( I can call him today / I can call him tomorrow).

There is **no progressive form** for modals. But we can put the verb that follows the modal into the progressive form.

**Verbs that share some characteristics with the modals**:  
be able/ have to / ought to / need

## **CHECK OUT THESE EXAMPLES AND ANALYSE THEM.**

- ✓ I can lift 25 kg. She can speak French.
- ✓ I couldn't finish the job.
- ✓ You can go now.
- ✓ It can be quite cold in winter.
- ✓ He can't be at home. He could have left last night.
- ✓ May I borrow your umbrella, please?
- ✓ You must do it. I had to do it. I'll have to do it.
- ✓ We mustn't forget our passports.
- ✓ You must have seen him.
- ✓ It must be Anna calling.
- ✓ You needn't wait for me.
- ✓ The exam can't have been difficult if he passed without studying.
- ✓ She should be at home by now.
- ✓ Shall I open the window?

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