

MODALS AND THEIR USES

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Modal verbs are verbs that help us understand how another verb is being used. Modal verbs are *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, and would*. They are used to demonstrate certainty, necessity, or possibility.

- ☑ If I want to let someone know that there is a chance I will make it to his/her birthday, but not for certain, I could say “I *may* make it out to your party, but work usually leaves me tired.”
- ☑ If I want them to know that I will certainly be there, then the modal would change to demonstrate that, i.e. “I *will* make it out to your party, even if I have to hitch a ride.”
- ☑ If there was someone I had to see at his/her party, I could demonstrate the need to attend the party by stating “I *must* make it out to your party to speak with Rachel.”

➤ *The modal changes to reflect a possibility, certainty, or a necessity.*

Modals and the verbs that follow them do not change from their base form. In English, a verb generally changes depending on whether we are speaking in first, second, or third person. For example, “He *runs* home,” as opposed to “I *run* home.” *I run home* is written in first person and the **verb** does not take an s behind it. *He runs home* is written in third person, and the verb run does take an -s behind it.

These rules change when modals are applied:

- ☑ When using modals, the verb does not change regardless of whether or not the point of view is first, second, or third person.
 - We *might topple* your stack of books if you keep speaking.
 - The cart *would topple* the display if I pushed it hard enough.

The verb that follows a modal does not change to reflect past tense. In English, a verb will change depending on whether we are speaking in past or present/future **tense**. For example, “I *skip* to the grocery store” as opposed to “I *skipped* to the grocery store.” Notice that in the first example, the sentence is written in first person and in the present tense. In the second example, the sentence is still in first person. However, it is written in past tense.

- ☑ When using modals, the verb does not change to reflect past tense.
 - I *can drink* a cup of coffee.
 - James Bond *will somersault* out of the airplane.
 - The children *could have run* the school on their own.

➤ Note: To express the future tense the modal *will* is most commonly used. However, other modals may be used as well.

Practice with the sentences below being sure to leave the verb(s) as is or removing the -s or -es when needed.

1. Tom could builds a house with his eyes closed. He makes everything look so easy.
2. Janet and Ron would walk for miles. They will beats everyone else in the Walk-a-thon.
3. Phil cheers for his favorite team. They can win the Super Bowl this year!
4. The school launched its new design for the baseball field. This is something that could has a big impact on the school.

Generally, when there are two verbs used adjacently in a sentence, the word *to* is added between them. “I like *to* eat pizza,” for example, has the verbs *like* and *eat*, separated by the word *to*. This is not the case when using a modal. Although a modal is considered a verb, it is not separated by the word *to*. For example, in the sentence “the house *could catch* fire any minute,” the verb *catch* follows the modal *could*, but it is not separated by the word *to*.

- Do not use *to* in front of a main verb that follows a modal.
 - Since family is central to Filipino culture, Filipino children *could have* many godparents.
 - Many children *would like* to be superheroes.

Practice with the sentences below, being sure to leave the word *to* when it is used correctly, and to remove it when it is used incorrectly.

1. I like to fish on Fridays.
2. I could to fish every Friday.
3. My friends love to eat ice cream, but I would to prefer candy instead.
4. When I run, I should to start bringing my phone because it can be dangerous.

Modals and their meanings

Can	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General ability • Informal request or permission 	<p>I <i>can</i> sing for the king when they bring the strings.</p> <p><i>Can</i> you sing? You <i>can</i> begin singing whenever you like because the strings have arrived.</p>
Could	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General ability (past) • Polite, informal request or permission 	<p>I <i>could</i> walk for eight miles, but now I can only walk for two.</p> <p><i>Could</i> you teach me how to say hello in Portuguese? You <i>could</i> take me out on Friday.</p>
May	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal request or permission • possibility 	<p><i>May</i> I have this dance? You <i>may</i> not go to the restroom till after the meeting.</p> <p>The man in yellow <i>may</i> want his shoes back.</p>
Might (shows stronger chances than may)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • possibility 	<p>I'm so hungry I <i>might</i> starve.</p>
Must	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • necessity (present or future) • strong probability • near certainty (present or past) 	<p>I <i>must</i> speak with the president immediately.</p> <p>That little boy <i>must</i> be hungry. He hasn't eaten in days.</p> <p>I <i>must</i> have left my wallet at home.</p>
Should	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • suggestions or advice • obligations or duties • expectations 	<p>You <i>should</i> chew your food before you swallow.</p> <p>Every citizen <i>should</i> vote.</p> <p>The kid's meal <i>should</i> come with a toy.</p>
Will	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • certainty • requests • promises and offers 	<p>I <i>will</i> make it to your birthday.</p> <p><i>Will</i> you sing the song <i>Summer Days</i>?</p> <p>I <i>will</i> give you \$1,000,000 if you can tell me who the president of The United States was in 1835.</p>
Would	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polite requests • Habitual or repeated actions (past) 	<p><i>Would</i> you please chew with your mouth closed?</p> <p>Tyler <i>would</i> always cry when he watched the movie <i>E.T.</i></p>