

Modal verbs

can, could, should,
would, must, may, might

Modal verbs express possibility, ability, permission, obligation, recommendation or wishes. They can also be used for speculating.

Modal verbs -

- do not have an infinitive with *to*
- can only form a sentence if followed by another verb in the base form (infinitive without *to*)

*I **can** speak Spanish.*

- do not change their form (there is no *s* in the third person singular)
- form questions and negations without the auxiliary verb *to do*

***Can** you swim? - I **can't** swim.*

- cannot be used in all tenses and cannot be combined with other modal verbs; because of this, alternative modal expressions exist

The negative form of
must - ***mustn't*** - means
not to be allowed to
(not ***don't have to***)

You are **not obliged** to read my email.

*I sent you an email, but you **don't have to** read it.*

*You can ask me any question, but you **must not** read my emails.*

You are **not allowed** to read my emails.

- are used like auxiliaries in question tags

*He cannot speak French, **can** he?*

Exercises

Fill in the blanks with the best suitable/correct modal verb/auxiliary:

1. They ... arrive on time if they leave now.

*They **might** (can/could) arrive on time if they leave now.*

2. Now that he hasn't arrived, we ... start the meeting without him, ...we?

*Now that he hasn't arrived, we **must** start the meeting without him, **don't** we?.*

3. You look tired. You ... take a break.

*You look tired. You **should** (ought to) take a break.*

Rewrite the sentences using modal verbs:

4. You have to wear a seatbelt in the car.

*You **must** wear a seatbelt in the car.*

5. Students are allowed to use cell phones during the exam.

*Students **may** (can) use cell phones during the exam.*

6. It is possible that she forgot about the appointment

*She **might have forgotten** about the appointment.*

7. I am capable of handling difficult situations.

*I **can** handle difficult situations.*

8. You are not supposed to smoke during the meeting.

*You **must not** smoke during the meeting.*