

# Modals

Present

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What modal  
verbs do you  
know?



# Main modal verbs

- ▶ Can      could
- ▶ Must     should
- ▶ Shall
- ▶ May      might
- ▶ (Will    would)

# MODAL VERBS OF DEDUCTION

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## MUST

90-100% (sure it's TRUE)

- ➔ She must be in the garden. (=I'm sure she is in the garden)
- ➔ They must know each other.

## CAN'T

90-100% (sure NOT true)

- ➔ She can't be his mother. She's too young. (=I'm sure she is NOT his mother)
- ➔ He's just left. He can't be too far.

## MAY/MIGHT (NOT)

30-50% (maybe it's TRUE)

- ➔ He may/might be dead.

30-50% (maybe NOT true)

- ➔ He may/might not remember who you are. (=Maybe he does NOT remember)



Use **can't** (NOT **mustn't**)

- ❌ He's just left. He **mustn't be** too far.
- ✅ He's just left. He **can't be** too far.

Use **may/might** (NOT **can**)

- ❌ He isn't here. He **can be** at home.
- ✅ He isn't here. He **might be** at home



+ be + -ing verb

to speculate about actions in progress

- ➔ They are in Iniza. They must be having a great time.
- ➔ You're always hungry. I think that you might not be eating enough protein.
- ➔ New study suggests that air pollution may be making people unhappy.

# Structure

Subject + modal verb + bare infinitive  
(without to)

Modal verbs are INVARIABLE

# CAN - COULD - (BE ABLE TO) ?

# Can

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We use can to talk about

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1 possibility - 2 ability - 3 permission

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1 You can study artificial intelligence in Trieste

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1 You can go to the cinema in Trieste

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2 They can write well in English

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3 Students can study in the study rooms, but not in the classrooms

# could - be able to

- ▶ **Could** - general past ability, past impossibility (couldn't)
- ▶ Einstein could speak Italian.
- ▶ We couldn't have a lesson last week because the classroom wasn't free.
  
- ▶ **To be able to** - replaces 'can' in all tenses. In the present it can indicate surprise or effort.
- ▶ **Was/were able to** - past possibility on specific occasion



MAY - MIGHT - COULD  
?

# May - might - could

We use may (not), might (not) to make a guess about a situation

- ▶ You might not need a brace on your teeth but we don't know yet
- ▶ Where is Marta? I don't know, but she might have a lesson now.
- ▶ The x-ray might show a clean break in the bone.
- ▶ The rock could be sedimentary. It may not be igneous.
- ▶ This maths theorem might be revolutionary!

# MUST - HAVE TO ?

# Must - have to

- ▶ Must - ONLY in the present form
- ▶ Have to - all forms and tenses of the verb

So when you need **any tense other than the present**  
- use HAVE TO

**MUST** - obligation imposed by the law/rules and regulations

- obligation imposed by the person speaking
- logical deduction

**HAVE TO** - obligation imposed by another person

- obligation imposed by an external factor

Mustn't - don't have to  
?



**Mustn't** : you are obliged NOT to do an action


- ▶ You **mustn't** go into the classroom, the ceiling has fallen in.

(You can also use **can't**)

**Don't have to** : you are not obliged to do an action, but you can if you want to

- ▶ You **don't have to** come tomorrow, the lesson is optional.

**Mustn't -  
don't have to**



# SHOULD ?

We use **should** to give advice

- ▶ I think you should watch films in English

We use **should/shouldn't** to talk about something we think is a good/bad idea

- ▶ I **should** surf the internet in English.
- ▶ He **shouldn't** drink coffee in the evening, it makes him jittery.
- ▶ We use **should** to talk about something we expect to happen/be true
- ▶ Where are my study notes? They **should** be here on the desk.

# Should



# SHALL ?

We use **shall** in the interrogative form with **I** and **we** to offer to help

- ▶ You have a huge exam next week! **Shall I** help you study?
- ▶ You've got a lot of bags to take to your room. **Shall we** carry some?

We use **shall we...?** to make a suggestion

- ▶ **Shall we** have lunch together in the canteen?
- ▶ **Shall we** go to the cinema next week?

# Shall