

## Modals and semi-modals

- The nine main modals (*will, would, can, could, may, might, shall, should, must*) have only one form (ie they do not change tense or person) and are followed by a simple or continuous bare infinitive (eg *could + do, be doing, have done, have been doing*). They can also be followed by a bare infinitive in the passive (eg *could + be done, have been done*).
- Semi-modals have similar meanings to modals. They include: *need (to), ought to, had better* and *have (got) to*.
- Some semi-modals, such as *had better*, do not change tense or person. Others, such as *have (got) to*, do.
- Some semi-modals can be used in combination with modals, producing phrases such as *might have to*.

## Ability

Real ability	Current or general ability	<i>can, can't</i>	You <b>can't</b> really <b>speak</b> seven languages fluently, <b>can</b> you?
	Past ability	<i>could, couldn't</i>	There's no way you <b>could read</b> when you were two!
	Decisions made now about future ability	<i>can, can't, could, couldn't</i>	I <b>can get</b> you a paper when I go to the shop, if you like.
	Future ability	<i>will/won't be able to</i>	One day, maybe, all adults <b>will be able to read</b> and write.
Hypothetical ability	Current or general hypothetical ability	<i>could, couldn't</i>	I <b>couldn't go</b> on a quiz show. I'd be too scared!
	Future hypothetical ability	<i>could, couldn't</i>	I <b>could go</b> with them to the cinema tomorrow but I won't because I've already seen the film.
	Past hypothetical ability	<i>could have, couldn't have</i>	They <b>could have asked</b> the Prime Minister much more searching questions. I wonder why they didn't.

## Watch out!

- The full negative form of modals is written as two words, eg *could not*. The exception is *cannot*, which is one word.
- Can* and *could* cannot be used as infinitives. We can use *to be able to* instead.  
✓ I'd love **to be able to** come with you to the cinema tomorrow but I just can't.
- We don't usually use *could* for past ability on one occasion. We use *was/were able to, managed* or *succeeded*, etc.  
✓ Luckily, she **was able to** finish the article in time.
- However, with verbs such as *see, hear, feel*, etc we can use *could* for past ability on one occasion.  
✓ I **could see** that she was tired.

## Permission

Asking for permission	<i>may, could, couldn't, can, can't</i>	<b>Can I finish</b> watching this before I go to bed?
Giving/refusing permission	<i>may, may not, could, couldn't, can, can't</i>	No, you <b>can't</b> .

## Watch out!

- May* is more polite and formal than *could*, and *could* is more polite and formal than *can*.
- We don't usually use modals to talk about past permission. We can use *was/were allowed to*.  
✓ We **were allowed to** buy one comic each.
- However, we do use *could* to talk about past permission in reported speech. (see Unit 25 for more information)  
✓ Mum said we **could** buy one comic each.

## Advice

Asking for and giving advice	<i>should, shouldn't, ought to, oughtn't to, had better</i>	You <b>should try</b> to get that poem published.
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## Watch out!

- We can only use *hadn't better* in questions.  
✓ **Hadn't you better** check that these facts are actually true?
- We can also use *might/may as well* to give advice and make suggestions. This suggests that, although the suggestion is not perfect, there is no better option.  
✓ We **may as well** watch this as there's nothing else on.

## Criticism

Criticising past behaviour	<i>should have, shouldn't have, ought to have, oughtn't to have</i>	You <b>shouldn't have spoken</b> to Mrs Todd like that.
Expressing annoyance at past behaviour	<i>could have, might have</i>	You <b>could/might have told</b> me you were going to be late!
Criticising general behaviour	<i>will</i>	He <b>will slam</b> the door every time he goes out.
Criticising a specific example of someone's general behaviour	<i>would</i>	You <b>would take</b> the car just when I wanted to go out.

### Watch out!

We can also use *might* as well to suggest criticism.

✓ I **might as well** be dead for all you care.

## Obligation

Current or general obligation	<i>must, mustn't, have (got) to, need (to)</i>	You <b>have to be</b> a good communicator to be a press spokesperson.
A lack of current or general obligation	<i>don't have to, haven't got to, needn't, don't need (to)</i>	You <b>don't always need to have</b> a degree to become a journalist.
Future obligation	<i>will have to, must, mustn't, have (got) to, (will) need (to)</i>	You <b>'ll have to do</b> quite a lot of research before you write this report.
A lack of future obligation	<i>don't/won't have to, haven't got to, needn't, don't/won't need (to)</i>	I'm glad we <b>won't have to write</b> any more essays on this course.
Past obligation	<i>had to, needed (to)</i>	We <b>had to come up with</b> three questions each.
A lack of past obligation	<i>didn't have to, didn't need (to), needn't have</i>	In the past, politicians <b>didn't have to deal with</b> being in a 24-hour media spotlight.

### Watch out!

- We are more likely to use *must* for personal obligation (making our own decision about what we must do) and *have to* for external obligation (someone else making a decision about what we must do).
- Using *must* for questions is extremely formal. We usually use *have to*.  
✓ **Do you have to** have a degree to be a journalist?
- Mustn't* is used for prohibition. *Don't have to* is used for a lack of obligation.
- We can use *didn't have to* and *didn't need to* for things that we did or didn't actually do. However, we only use *needn't have done* for things that we actually did but weren't obliged to do.

## Degrees of certainty

Certainty (or near certainty) about now, the future or generally	<i>will, would, must, can, can't, could, couldn't</i>	'There's someone at the door.' 'That <b>'ll be</b> the postman.' 'It <b>can't be</b> . He's already been.'
Certainty (or near certainty) about the past	<i>will have, won't have, would have, wouldn't have, must have, can't have, couldn't have</i>	'They <b>won't have heard</b> the news, will they?' 'They <b>must have heard</b> by now, surely.'
Probability about now, the future or generally	<i>should, shouldn't, ought to, oughtn't to, may/might well (not), could well, might easily</i>	'The weather <b>should be</b> good tomorrow, shouldn't it?' 'Actually, the forecast said it <b>may well rain</b> .'
Probability about the past	<i>should have, shouldn't have, ought to have, oughtn't to have, may/might well (not) have, might easily (not) have</i>	'Jan <b>should have finished</b> writing her article by now, shouldn't she?' 'She <b>may well have done</b> , but I haven't seen it yet.'
Possibility about now, the future or generally	<i>could, may (not), might, mightn't, may/might/could just</i>	I <b>might (just) have</b> time to get to the library before it closes.
Possibility about the real past	<i>could have, may (not) have, might have, mightn't have</i>	Jim <b>might not have checked</b> his e-mail yet.

### Watch out!

*should* and *should have* can be used in *that* clauses after words expressing importance and reactions.

✓ It's strange that you **should** say that.    ✓ Was it necessary that Alan **should have been invited** to the meeting?

**A Circle the correct word or phrase. If both are correct, circle both.**

- 1 You **can't** / **couldn't** really talk when you were one year old, **can** / **could** you?
- 2 We **can** / **could** give you a lift home tonight, if you want.
- 3 I wish I **can** / **could** speak Russian, then **I'd be able to** / **I could** read Tolstoy in the original.
- 4 Excuse me, **could** / **may** you tell me how to get to the leisure centre from here?
- 5 I'm afraid we **can't** / **won't be able to** come to the wedding after all.
- 6 Thankfully, we **could** / **managed to** get to the airport just in time so we didn't miss the plane.
- 7 Dawn couldn't **go** / **have gone** to the barbecue as she had to work.
- 8 Would you like to **could** / **be able to** buy the flat you're renting?
- 9 In a thousand years, **can humans** / **will humans be able to** travel faster than the speed of light?
- 10 'Mum, can I watch TV and do my homework later?'  
'No, you **may** / **might** not!'
- 11 We could **catch** / **have caught** the last train after all, but of course we didn't know that at the time.
- 12 **Mayn't** / **Can't** I at least stay up till the end of the film?
- 13 Everyone **could** / **was able to** tell that Julie was upset about something.
- 14 **May** / **Can** I open the window, please? It's a little stuffy in here.
- 15 Because we had guests last Saturday, the kids **could** / **were allowed to** stay up till midnight.

**B Write a verb from the box in the correct form in each gap.**

do • eat • feel • go • have • invite • provide • recover • sit • speak • stand • work

- 1 It seems there's nothing anybody can ..... to stop the conflict escalating further.
- 2 She couldn't ..... anything in her left arm for about two hours. She said it was completely numb.
- 3 I don't think the Prime Minister will ever manage ..... from this scandal.
- 4 Can I ..... Tracy round after tea? We want to play my new computer game.
- 5 Liz has had another ice cream so why can't I ..... one? It's not fair!
- 6 When I was a child, my brothers and sisters and I weren't allowed ..... with the grown-ups except on special occasions.
- 7 Darren's allergic to wheat, so he can't ..... bread under any circumstances.
- 8 Dominic had said he spoke German, but when we got there it turned out he couldn't ..... a word!
- 9 I'd love to be able ..... from home, but in my job it's just not possible.
- 10 James could ..... for Parliament at the last election – he had enough support – but he wasn't willing to sacrifice his privacy.
- 11 A small cot for babies can ..... if you ask at reception.
- 12 We couldn't ..... to the concert anyway as Jamie wasn't very well.

**C If the word in bold is correct, put a tick. If it is incorrect, rewrite it correctly.**

- 1 Shouldn't you **getting** planning permission before you start building? .....
- 2 Gavin really ought not to **be** worn casual clothes to the interview last week. ....
- 3 She might have **gave** us a call to let us know she was all right. ....
- 4 You **should** better get a second opinion before you do anything drastic like knock down a supporting wall. ....
- 5 I don't think you **must** go to school today if you're not feeling well. ....
- 6 We definitely **should** not judge Karen until we know exactly what happened. ....

- 7 I probably won't get the job but I **should** as well apply for it, I suppose. ....
- 8 You **could** have told us you'd changed your mind about the holiday. How are we going to find a fourth person at this late stage? .....
- 9 We had **rather** book the tickets now, hadn't we? They might have sold out on the day. ....
- 10 Terry **would** leave his bedroom in such a mess all the time. It's just not good enough. ....
- 11 Michael was late, but then again he **will** be. ....
- 12 You **may** have asked me if I wanted to come with you! You know I need to go to the bank! .....

**D Write a word or short phrase in each gap so that the second sentence has a similar meaning to the first sentence.**

- 1 I would suggest seeing a doctor if it doesn't clear up.  
You had ..... a doctor if it doesn't clear up.
- 2 It was typical of Jerry to forget to feed the cat, wasn't it?  
Jerry ..... to feed the cat, ..... he?
- 3 I'm annoyed Diana didn't invite us to her engagement party.  
Diana ..... us to her engagement party.
- 4 Buying a yellow car was a mistake – everyone thinks I drive a taxi!  
I ..... a yellow car – everyone thinks I drive a taxi!
- 5 Teenagers are noisy, aren't they?  
Teenagers ..... make so much noise, ..... they?
- 6 It won't harm us to see what special offers are on at the moment.  
We ..... what special offers are on at the moment.
- 7 Don't you think you should type that essay, rather than write it in pen?  
..... better type that essay, rather than write it in pen?
- 8 It would probably have been a good idea if you'd asked Dad what he thought.  
You ..... to ..... Dad what he thought.

**E Write a word from the box in each gap. You will need two of the words twice.**

doesn't • got • had • has • have • must • needn't • will

- 1 I ..... have bothered preparing so much food; nobody ate anything anyway.
- 2 Do you ..... to have that music on so loud? I can't concentrate!
- 3 You ..... call before you come round, as we'll definitely be in.
- 4 It was difficult, but I knew I ..... to apologise.
- 5 Trisha ..... need to get a summer job as her parents are quite well-off.
- 6 ..... you have to be there in court yourself, or can a lawyer represent you?
- 7 We didn't ..... to wear a uniform to school today, so I went in jeans and a T-shirt.
- 8 I think Damien ..... to stay in hospital for the next four or five weeks.
- 9 Children ..... not be left unattended under any circumstances.
- 10 We haven't ..... to move out for another six months, but we've started looking for a new place anyway.

- 7 'I can't wait to get that blue top tomorrow.'  
'I wouldn't get too excited. They only had one left, so they **may / might** well have sold out.'
- 8 'It's got very cold.'  
'Yes, I think it **must / might** easily snow tonight.'
- 9 'I can't wait till Roger gets here!'  
'He should **land / have landed** by now, so he'll be here in about an hour.'
- 10 'I hope they've got some tickets left.'  
'We **should / might** just be lucky and get the last two.'

**I Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between three and eight words, including the word given.**

- 1 It's possible that Greg didn't go to Swansea after all. **not**  
Greg ..... to Swansea after all.
- 2 It's quite likely that Sasha was lying about what Doug said. **well**  
Sasha ..... about what Doug said.
- 3 The most likely situation is that they awarded Grandpa the medal during the war. **must**  
Grandpa ..... during the war.
- 4 I'd be surprised if Derek has already arrived. **ought**  
Derek ..... yet.
- 5 Jake, is it definite that they haven't announced the winner yet? **will**  
Jake, ..... announced yet?
- 6 It's highly likely that Stephen was listening. **may**  
Stephen ..... listening.
- 7 It's not possible that Andrew is half Spanish. **be**  
Andrew ..... half Spanish.

**J Choose the correct answer.**

- 1 Even in a million years, we ..... go back in time.  
A couldn't    C won't be able to  
B can't     D aren't able to
- 2 I ..... at the exam paper lying on Mr Gregson's desk, but I didn't want to risk it.  
A could look    C can have looked  
B can look     D could have looked
- 3 ..... Eliot better tell his mum what happened?  
A Mustn't     C Shouldn't  
B Oughtn't     D Hadn't
- 4 You ..... have let us know you'd changed your phone number.  
A may     C would  
B could     D will
- 5 ..... lectures at your university?  
A Haven't students got to have attended  
B Needn't students have attended  
C Mustn't students to attend  
D Don't students have to attend
- 6 We ..... as well try to sell this old sofa before throwing it out.  
A could     C might  
B should     D can
- 7 Jeremy may well not ..... about the accident yet.  
A tell     C have told  
B to tell     D have been told
- 8 It's essential that the documents ..... be destroyed immediately.  
A should     C ought to  
B would     D had better
- 9 Luckily I ..... a new pair of sunglasses as I found mine at the bottom of a bag.  
A needn't have bought    C needed not to buy  
B didn't need to buy    D hadn't to buy
- 10 I'm thinking of going on *Million Euro Spender*; I'd love to ..... spend a million euros in one day!  
A have to     C can  
B must     D be able

**E**

- 35 C
- 36 D
- 37 C
- 38 D
- 39 B
- 40 C
- 41 A
- 42 B

**Unit 9****A**

- 1 couldn't could
- 2 can/could
- 3 could I'd be able to/I could
- 4 could
- 5 can't/won't be able to
- 6 managed to
- 7 go/have gone
- 8 be able to
- 9 will humans be able to
- 10 may
- 11 have caught
- 12 Can't
- 13 could/was able to
- 14 May/Can
- 15 were allowed to

**B**

- 1 do
- 2 feel
- 3 to recover
- 4 invite
- 5 have
- 6 to sit/to eat
- 7 eat/have
- 8 speak
- 9 to work
- 10 have stood
- 11 be provided
- 12 have gone

**C**

- 1 get
- 2 have
- 3 given
- 4 had
- 5 should
- 6 ✓
- 7 might/may
- 8 ✓
- 9 better
- 10 will
- 11 would
- 12 might/could/should

**D**

- 1 better see
- 2 would forget wouldn't
- 3 might have invited/could have invited/ought to have invited/should have invited
- 4 oughtn't to have bought/shouldn't have bought
- 5 will/do won't/don't
- 6 might as well see/may as well see
- 7 Hadn't you
- 8 probably ought have asked

**E**

- 1 needn't
- 2 have
- 3 needn't
- 4 had
- 5 doesn't
- 6 Will
- 7 have
- 8 has
- 9 must
- 10 got

**F**

- 1 don't have to pay/don't need to pay/needn't pay
- 2 have to be kept/need to be kept/must be kept
- 3 doesn't have to be picked up/doesn't need to be picked up/needn't be picked up/doesn't need picking up
- 4 won't have to rely/won't need to rely
- 5 must be sent off/will have to be sent off/need to be sent off/need sending off
- 6 had to get/needed to get
- 7 Did you have to make/Did you need to make
- 8 mustn't believe
- 9 didn't have to put/didn't need to put
- 10 do farmers have to get up/do farmers need to get up/must farmers get up
- 11 to have to commute
- 12 needn't have done

**G**

- 1 to
- 2 done
- 3 ought/claims
- 4 do

- 5 to
- 6 got
- 7 must/should/dare
- 8 need/might
- 9 had/needed/wanted
- 10 well
- 11 will
- 12 be
- 13 should
- 14 should/need
- 15 had

**H**

- 1 That'll
- 2 be
- 3 can't
- 4 must
- 5 can't/couldn't
- 6 wouldn't
- 7 may/might
- 8 might
- 9 have landed
- 10 might

**I**

- 1 may not have been/gone/might not have been/gone
- 2 may well have been lying/might well have been lying
- 3 must have been awarded the medal
- 4 ought not to have arrived
- 5 will the winner definitely not have been
- 6 may well have been
- 7 couldn't be/can't be

**J**

- 1 C
- 2 D
- 3 D
- 4 B
- 5 D
- 6 C
- 7 D
- 8 A
- 9 B
- 10 A

**Unit 10****A**

- 1 exaggerating
- 2 contradicted
- 3 boast
- 4 flattering