

Using Modal Verbs

Modal verbs are auxiliary verbs which cannot usually work alone. They are used with a main verb.

These are **modal verbs**:

might

will

should

may

would

can

could

must

shall

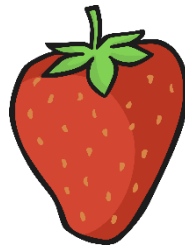
ought to

Modal verbs make questions by inversion.

She **can** go out. → **Can** she go out?

We **could** drive there. → **Could** we drive there?

Children **should** eat fruit. → **Should** children eat fruit?

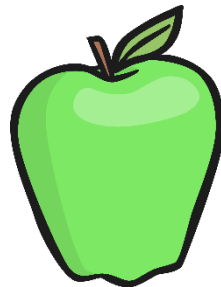


Modal verbs can be used negatively.

She **can** go out. → She **can't** go out.

We **could** drive there. → We **couldn't** drive there.

Children **should** eat fruit. → Children **shouldn't** eat fruit.



Modal verbs can be used to show how **possible** something is, or how **likely** it is to happen/have happened.

For example:

1. He's very late. He **could have missed** the train.
2. It's snowing so it **must be** very cold outside.
3. They **will lock** the windows when they go out.



Can you spot the **Modal verbs** used to show **possibility** in these sentences?

1. Mum **might** take us swimming after school.
2. You **could** eat a banana instead of those sweets.
3. “Hurry up! We **will** be late!” said Dad.
4. We **can** go the other way – it’s quicker.
5. You **ought** to go to bed earlier.



Which **Modal verbs** are missing from these sentences?

1. You **must** be hot in that thick coat.
2. If it's dry, **shall** we play outside?
3. He's so fast, he **should** win the race.
4. I'm fed up with my long hair. I **might** have it cut.



Did you choose these **modal verbs**?
Which others could you have used?

Modal verbs can also be used to show:

advice or obligation

Pupils **must** wear a uniform.

You **should** not smoke.

permission

May I leave a few minutes early?

Could we go to the post box on the way?

Please **can** we have an ice cream?

habits

I **will** often have cereal for my breakfast.

We **shall** always enjoy a walk in the park.

ability



I **can** drive a tractor.

My grandfather **could** draw very well.

