



# INDIAN SCHOOL DARSAIT DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



Topic: Modals

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- Modals are helping verbs
- Used with the base form of the verb, modals create verbal phrases.
- Modals do not change form.
- Modals never end in “s” even in 3rd person singular
- Use “not” to make modal verbs negative.
- Don’t use double modals.
- Modals lack past tense forms, except could and would which serve as the past of can and will.

**The modal verbs are:**

can, could, may, might, must, ought to, shall, should, will and would.

Modal verbs are used to express functions such as:

1. Permission
2. Ability
3. Obligation
4. Prohibition
5. Lack of necessity
6. Advice
7. possibility
8. probability

**English Modal Verbs Table**

Modal verb	Usage	Example
<b>can</b>	ability	I can do several things at the same time.
	when something is possible	Miracles can happen.
	permission	You can go now.
	informal requests	Can you come here for a minute?
<b>could</b>	past form of "can"	She said she could pay for us as well.
	polite requests	Could you move

		your bag, please?
	possibility	It could be that he missed the train.
<b>may</b>	possibility	It may rain tomorrow.
	ask for or give permission (formal)	May I speak?
<b>might</b>	past form of "may"	He said he might change his mind.
	possibility	This might fail.
<b>must</b>	you have to do it	You must obey the law.
	it's very logical or very likely to happen	They left so early, they must be home by now.
<b>must not/ mustn't</b>	you are not allowed to do it	You mustn't park here.
<b>shall</b>	future for "I" and "we"	I shall see him tomorrow.
	questions and suggestions for "I" and "we"	Let's continue, shall we?
<b>should</b>	the right thing to do	She should call the police.
	advice	- What should I do? - You should stop thinking about it.
	what is likely or expected to happen	We should be back by midnight.
<b>will</b>	future action or states (not plans)	Prices will go up next summer.
	promises and intentions	It's alright, I'll pick it up.
<b>would</b>	past form of "will"	He told me he would come.
	imagined situations	What would you do if you were him?
	for polite requests, offers and invitations	- Would you please sit down? - Would you like some tea? - We are meeting with Sarah next Saturday, would you like to come along?
	to say what you want to do or have	I would like a piece of cake.
<b>ought to</b>	the right thing to do	You ought to apologize.

## English Modal Verbs – Situations Table

Situation	Modal Verb	Example
<b>requests</b> (formal)	may	May I sit down?
<b>requests</b> (informal)	can	Can I sit down?
<b>requests</b> (polite)	could	Could I sit down?
<b>requests</b> (polite)	would	Would you mind if I sit down?
<b>permission</b> (formal)	may	You may sit down.
<b>permission</b> (informal)	can	You can sit down.
<b>obligation</b> (full)	must	You must tell the police the truth.
<b>obligation</b> (partial)	should	You should tell your friends the truth.
<b>obligation</b> (partial) (less common)	ought to	You ought to tell your friends the truth.
<b>logical conclusions</b> (stronger than "should")	must	He left an hour ago, so he must be there already.
<b>logical conclusions</b> (weaker than "must")	should	He left half an hour ago, I believe he should be there already.
<b>possibility</b> (general)	can	It can rain sometimes.
<b>possibility</b>	could	It could rain, but it is

(weaker than "may" and "might")		not very common in this part of the country.
<b>possibility</b> (weaker than "may")	might	It's not very cloudy yet, but it might rain.
<b>possibility</b> (stronger than "might")	may	It starts getting cloudy – it may rain soon.
<b>future</b> actions/states/intentions	will	Look at the sky! It will rain soon.