

MODALS

- Modals are helping verbs.
- They are used to convey meaning, particularly the degree of certainty of the main verb.
- Some modals have more than one meaning.

The following table shows the various meanings of each modal.

FUNCTION/ MEANING	MODAL	EXAMPLE
Ability/past ability	Can/Could	They <u>can</u> run a 10K. They <u>could</u> swim by the age of
Permission	May/Can/Could	three. You <u>may</u> have one cookie. They <u>can</u> only go out tonight if they finish their homework. <u>Could</u> I borrow your notes?
Requesting	Can/Could/Will/Would	<u>Can</u> you get the door for me? <u>Will</u> you join us for dinner?
Future/Intention	Will	They <u>will</u> move to Calgary if they get the job.
Possibility	Could/May/Might	I <u>could</u> go to Algonquin Park for my vacation. They <u>may</u> have eaten all the cake.
Recommending/Advising	Should/Ought to/Had Better	They <u>might</u> win the Nobel Prize this year. You <u>should</u> see a doctor about that. (gentle) They <u>had better</u> show up on time!
Deduction	Must	(strong)
Necessity/Obligation	Must/Have To/ Have Got To	They <u>must</u> have left early this morning. You <u>must</u> wear a coat today. They <u>have to</u> do the dishes tonight. You <u>have got to</u> stop biting your nails!
Prohibition	Must Not	(strong)

You mustn't smoke inside. (strong)



FORMS

1. Modal (present or past modal) + base verb (i.e. the unchanged word you find in the dictionary)
2. Modal have + past participle [*used only for past]

Degree of Certainty

The most common modals have a degree of certainty implied when you choose to use them.

100% Certainty– Will (i.e., no doubt)	She will come to see you after class.
98% Impossibility – Can't/Couldn't (i.e., <i>very unlikely</i>)	I can't see you after class.
98% Possibility – Can (i.e., <i>very likely</i>)	I can see you after class.
90-95% Logical Deduction – Must (i.e., likely deduction)	He must be stuck in traffic.
75% Expectation – Should (i.e., quite possible)	She should be here any minute.
50% Possibility – Might/May/Could (i.e., possible)	I may come to the party on Friday.



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