Modal Verbs

The modal verbs are: *can, could, may, might, must, ought to, will, would, shall, should, have to, need*. They take no *-s* in the third person singular except for *have to* and *need*. They come before the subject in questions and are followed by 'not' in negations. Except for *ought to* and *have to*, modal verbs are followed by an infinitive without *to*. *Sorry, I* ***can't*** *come. I* ***have to*** *meet Pam.*

Modal verbs are used to express: ability, possibility, probability, logical assumptions, permission, requests, offers, suggestions, advice, criticism, obligation, prohibition or necessity.

Ability

Can / Be able to (ability in the present/future) 'Can' is more usual and less formal than 'be able to' when talking about the present or future.
Ann ***can*** *type fast.* ***I can*** *pay you next week.* (usual) *I* ***will be able to*** *pay you next week.* (less usual)

Was able to (= managed to do) (ability in the past) is used for either repeated or single actions.
I was able to *go on a trip round the city last week.* (single action)

Could (ability in the past) 'Could' is more usual than 'was able to.' It is used in statements for repeated actions. However, with the verbs *see, hear, smell, understand*, etc. we normally use 'could' for single actions. *She* ***could*** */* ***was able to*** *play the violin when she was six.* (repeated action)
I could *smell something burning.* (single action) **(NOT:** ~~*I was able to smell*~~ ...)

Could / Was able to can both be used in negations and questions for either repeated or single actions.
She ***couldn't*** */* ***wasn't able to*** *pass her driving test.* (past single action)
Were you able to */* ***Could you*** *get to work every day last week?* (past repeated action)

Can is used in the present. Could is the past tense of can. We use be able to to form all the other tenses. ***I will be able to*** *get a job when I finish school.*

1 **Complete the sentences with *can*, *can't*, *could* or *couldn't* and the verbs below.**

~~come~~ open read drive use stop

1 I'm sorry I ...*can't come*... to your party on Saturday.
2 Oliver's joke was so funny that we ..... laughing.
3 Xenia ..... but she hasn't got a car.
4 "Oh no, my battery's dead! I ..... my mobile phone."
5 When Jake was five, he ..... and write.
6 Claire tried but she ..... the door.

2 Complete the answers using *was / were able to*.

1 A: Did you get to the concert on time?
B: Yes, although there was traffic, we *were able to get there on time*.

2 A: Did Ben manage to find his watch?
B: Yes. After searching the entire house, he ...

3 A: Did you finish your work in the garden?
B: Yes. It took all afternoon but I ...

4 A: Did you have a hard time finding the place?
B: No. We ... quite easily.

3 Fill in *can / be able* in the correct form.

1 I *will be able* to speak perfect English very soon.
2 " ... you hear me, Mum?"
3 They ... swim since they were five.
4 When he got to the front door, he ... hear a dog barking inside the house.
5 I would love ... to fly an aeroplane.

Possibility – Probability – Logical assumptions

Possibility	
may / might / could + present infinitive =perhaps; it's possible that something will happen in the future or perhaps it is true at the moment	*Sam **may / might / could** pass his test this time.* (It's possible that he will pass his test.) *Where's Jean? She **could** be at school.*
may / might / could + perfect infinitive =perhaps something happened in the past	*She looks miserable. She **may / might / could have lost** her job.* (Perhaps she has lost her job.)
Note: Could + perfect infinitive is also used for something which was possible but didn't actually happen.	*Don't drive so fast! You **could have hit** that dog.* (Luckily, you didn't hit the dog.)
Probability	
ought to / should + present infinitive = something is probable now or in the future	*Tom **ought to / should** pass his exams.* (He will probably pass.)
ought to / should + perfect infinitive = we expected something to happen but we don't know if it happened or not	*Has Nancy reached Paris yet? **She ought to / should have phoned** an hour ago.* (We don't know whether she phoned or not.)
Logical assumptions	
can't / couldn't + present infinitive =I don't think so; it's logically improbable	*She **can't** be rich. She lives in a small flat.* (I don't think she's rich.)
must + present infinitive =I think so, I'm fairly sure; it's logically probable	*His face is red. He **must** be very angry.* (I think he's very angry.)
can't is the opposite of must	*It **can't** be true. It **must** be a lie.*
can't / couldn't + perfect infinitive =It's impossible that something happened in the past.	*She **can't / couldn't have lost** her way; she **must have missed** the train.* (= It's not possible she lost her way. It's very probable she missed the train.)
must + perfect infinitive =It's very probable that something happened in the past.	

To express possibility in questions we don't use *may*. We use: *Can he? Could he? Is he likely to? Is it likely that? Might he? Can he succeed? **Could he** succeed? **Is he likely** to succeed? **Is it likely that** he will succeed? **Might he** succeed? **Can / Could he have** finished?* (NOT: ~~*May he have finished?*~~, ~~*May he succeed?*~~ ...)

4 Complete the exchanges with *can't*, *may*, *should* or *must*.

1 A: Are you going out this evening?
B: We're not sure. We ...may... stay at home.

2 A: Juliet's not answering her telephone.
B: Well, she ..... be out then because she always picks up if she's in.

3 A: Are the boys playing in their room?
B: They ..... be. They're far too quiet.

4 A: Where's Victoria?
B: I don't know. She ..... have been here by now.

5 A: I ..... have to work late tonight. If so, would you mind starting dinner?
B: Of course not.

6 A: Have you posted your letter to me yet?
B: Yes. You ..... receive it in two days.

Permission

Asking for permission	
can (informal) / could (more formal) **may / might (very formal)**	***Can*** / ***Could*** *I interrupt you for a second?* ***May*** / ***Might*** *I speak to the bank manager, please?*
Giving or refusing permission	
can (informal; giving permission) **Note: *could* is not used in the present to give permission**	***Can*** *I use your phone? Of course you* ***can***. (informal) ***Could*** *I use your phone? Of course you* ***can***. (NOT: ~~*of course you could*~~)
may (formal; giving permission – also used in written notices or formal announcements)	***May*** *I use your phone? Certainly you* ***may***. (formal) *Luggage* ***may*** *be left here.* (written notice)
mustn't / can't (informal – refusing permission)	*I'm afraid you* ***can't*** / ***mustn't*** *enter the room.*
may not (formal – refusing permission)	*Rubbish* ***may not*** *be left here.* (written notice)
Talking about permission	
can / be allowed to (to talk about the future or present)	*Pupils* ***are allowed to*** / ***can*** *use the school swimming pool free of charge.*
could (to talk about the past – used for repeated actions)	*She* ***could*** *always play at the park after school.* (repeated action)
was / were allowed to (to talk about the past – used for repeated or single actions)	*The reporter* ***was allowed to*** (NOT: ~~*could*~~) *take a photo of the pop singer.* (single action)
couldn't / wasn't allowed to (in negations or questions for either repeated or single actions)	*The foreigner* ***wasn't allowed to*** / ***couldn't*** *enter the country without a visa.* (single action)

5 Study the situations and write sentences using *may*, *can*, *could* or *can't*.

1 You want to see the headmaster. Ask the secretary for permission.
May I Can I Could I see the headmaster, please?

2 Your sister wants to use your computer but you have a lot of schoolwork. Refuse permission.
.....

3 You want to go camping with your cousins. Ask you parents for permission.
.....

4 Your friend wants to borrow one of your books. Give him your permission.
.....

5 You'd like to leave school early because you aren't feeling well. Ask the teacher for permission.
.....

Requests – Offers – Suggestions

Requests (asking someone to do something)	
Can you? (informal request) **Will you?** (familiar) **Could you?** (polite request) **May I?** (formal request) **Would you / Would you mind?** (more polite and formal than 'could you')	***Can you** help me, please?* ***Will you** get me my glasses, please?* ***Could you** make me some lemonade?* ***May I** have a glass of water?* (request) compare: ***May I** open the window?* (asking for permission) ***Would you** post this letter for me?* ***Would you mind** typing these letters for me?*
Offers (offering to do something)	
I'll (I'm willing to do sth – informal) **Shall I/we / Can I/we** (Do you want me/us to ...? – informal) **Would you like / Would you like me to ...?**	***I'll** do the shopping if you like.* ***Shall I** help you with your luggage?* ***Would you like** some more tea?*
Suggestions (making suggestions)	
Shall I/we? **I/We can / could** **We also express suggestions with:** **Let's / How about / Why don't we?** **What about?**	***Shall we** go to the theatre?* ***We can** / **could** go to the cinema if you like.* ***Let's** go to the park. **How about** going to the park?* ***Why don't we** go to the park? **What about** going to the park?*

6 **Fill in: *would you, I'll, shall, let's, why don't you* or *how about*.**

Harry: Oh no! I can't find all that work I did on my laptop.
Ben: 1) ..... *I'll* ..... help if you want.
Harry: Really? Thanks. I'm hopeless with anything electronic.
Ben: OK. 2) ..... clicking on this icon here?
Harry: Nothing's happening.
Ben: Mmm. 3) ..... switch it off and start again?
Harry: No, that's not working. It's still the same problem.
Ben: 4) ..... see if you've deleted the work by accident.
Harry: 5) ..... show me how to do that?
Ben: It's easy. Just click here. No. It doesn't look like your work is still here.
Harry: That's terrible! All that work took me two hours to do last night.
Ben: 6) ..... I phone my brother? He's a computer expert.
Harry: No thanks. I'll just have to do it again and be more careful this time!

7 What would you say in these situations? Use the words in brackets.

1 You're on the train. You have a seat but a pregnant lady is standing. You offer her your seat. **(would)**
You: *Would you like to sit down?*
Lady: Yes, thank you. You're so kind.

2 You're at a restaurant and you'd like some more water. You ask the waitress. **(could)**
You: .....
Waitress: Yes, Madam. Right away!

3 You've invited a friend over for dinner. You've just finished the meal and offer her dessert. **(how)**
You: .....
Friend: Sounds great!

4 You're driving a car. Your friend isn't wearing his seatbelt. You ask him to wear it. **(can)**
You: .....
Friend: Of course! I can't believe I forgot!

5 You need help cleaning the house. You ask your roommate. **(will)**
You: .....
Roommate: Sure. What would you like me to do?

8 Choose the correct modal verb.

1 We **may** / **could** try and fix it ourselves. What do you think?
2 I'm sorry. I didn't hear you. **Could** / **May** you please repeat that?
3 **I will** / **shall** do that for you if you like.
4 **Could you** / **Would you mind** waiting another quarter of an hour?
5 We haven't had a proper chat for ages. **Why don't you** / **Would you like** come round to my place for dinner tonight?
6 **Shall I** / **What about** help you with your homework?
7 **Would you like** / **Will you like** another slice of pizza, Claire?
8 **Why don't we** / **How about** going to the Maldives this year?
9 **Would you** / **May you** give me your full name, please?
10 OK, **shall** / **may** we say 8:00 pm then? How does that sound?

Advice – Criticism

Advice (saying what the best thing to do is)	
should / ought to + present infinitive **(it is the best thing to do; I advise you to)**	*You **should** stop smoking.* (general advice; I advise you to)
Note: *ought to* is sometimes used for advice based on laws, rules or generally accepted ideas	*You **ought to** treat animals kindly.* (Most people believe this.)
had better (it's a good idea – advice for a specific situation)	***Shall I** tell him the truth?* (Is it the right thing to do?) *You'**d better** call your parents or they'll worry.* (It's a good idea; specific situation)
Shall I? (asking for advice)	
Criticism (saying that sb did the wrong thing in the past)	
should / ought to / could + perfect infinitive	*You **shouldn't have been** rude to her yesterday.* (but you were) *You **should have locked** the door before leaving.* (but you didn't) *You **could have called** her yesterday.* (past)

9 Underline the correct modal verb.

Georgina: Sasha, you really 1) **ought** / **should** take your car to a mechanic.
Sasha: Why? What's the problem?
Georgina: Well, for one thing, your brakes don't sound too good. And for another thing, your tyres are looking a bit old. You 2) **should** / **ought** to get them checked out.
Sasha: My tyres are fine. I've only had them seven years.
Georgina: Seven years! Well, no wonder! You 3) **should** / **had better** have replaced them ages ago.
Sasha: Really? Well, you 4) **could** / **had better** have told me before. OK, I'll go to a mechanic. But who? 5) **Shall** / **Ought to** I go to yours?
Georgina: Why not? He's really good. You 6) **had better** / **hadn't better** call him today, though because he's going away on holiday next week.
Sasha: OK, I will. Thanks.

10 Read the situations and write what you would say using *should*, *ought to*, *could*, *might* as in the example:

1 Your close friend lied to you and when you found out you were very upset. What do you tell your friend?
You shouldn't have lied to me. / You ought to have told me the truth. / You could have told me the truth.

2 Adam can't find his mobile phone. You think he left it in the car. What do you say to him?
.....

3 Your brother failed his driving test because he didn't practise enough. What do you tell him?
.....

4 Your friend is always late for school because she wakes up late. What do you say to her?
.....

5 Your sister wore your new jacket without asking you. What do you say to her?
.....

6 Yesterday you waited for your friend for over an hour at the library and he didn't even call to say he wasn't coming. What do you say to him?
.....

Necessity – Obligation – Prohibition

Obligation – Necessity

must / have to (it is necessary, I'm obliged to) **Must is used only in the present and future when the speaker decides.** **Have to is used when the necessity comes from outside the speaker or when others decide for him.** **Have got to (more informal and usual than 'have to') is used for obligation on a single occasion.** **Ought to (duty; it's the right thing to do but people don't always do it.)** **Need (it's necessary) is followed by a passive full infinitive or an *-ing* form and takes -s in the 3rd person singular in statements.**	*I **must** lose some weight.* (I say so.) *I **had to** go to work early yesterday.* ('Must' is not possible here as it is used only in the present.) *I **have to** lose some weight.* (The doctor says so; the doctor decides for me.) *I've **got to** tidy my room; Mother is angry.* *I've **got to** phone her; she will be worried.* *We **ought to** respect the environment.* (But we don't always do it.) *Your hair **needs** to be cut.* ***or*** *Your hair **needs** cutting.*

Must is used only for present and future situations. It borrows the rest of its tenses from have to. Have to forms its questions and negations with do / does (Present Simple) and did (Past Simple). ***Did you have to** stay late at work yesterday? Yes, **I had to** type some urgent letters.* ('Must' is not possible in the past tense.)

Absence of Necessity

needn't + bare present infinitive / don't have to / don't need to (It is not necessary in the present or future.) **didn't need to / didn't have to (It wasn't necessary to do sth.)** **needn't + bare perfect infinitive (We know that something happened in the past although it was not necessary.)**	*You **needn't** take a jacket. It's rather warm.* *You **don't have to / don't need to** take a jacket. It's rather warm.* *He **didn't need / have to** take a taxi because I gave him a lift.* (It wasn't necessary, so he didn't.) *She **needn't have bought** any milk. There was a lot in the fridge.* (I know she bought some milk but there was no need.)

Prohibition

mustn't (it's forbidden) **can't (you aren't allowed to)**	*You **mustn't** enter the room.* (it's forbidden) *You **can't** wait here.* (you are not allowed to)

11 **State who decides, the speaker or others, then fill in *must* or *have to*.**

1 I .*must*. cut the grass.



.....*the speaker*.....

2 I ..... cut the grass.



.....

3 I ..... wear a uniform at work.



.....

4 I ..... repair the roof.



.....

5 I ..... repair the roof.



.....

6 I ..... be quiet.



.....

12 **Choose the correct modal verb.**

Roborior GUARD DOG

You 1) **don't have to** / **mustn't** pay for expensive security systems to protect your home. With the Roborior Guard Dog burglars will definitely think twice before breaking in.

If you 2) **mustn't** / **have to** get away and someone has managed to get inside your home, your robot will call you on your mobile phone and alert the police, too. You 3) **don't have to** / **mustn't** be at home to move your robot around because Roborior works by itself. So you 4) **have to** / **mustn't** worry, Roborior will capture everything on camera until the police arrive!

13 **Look at the photographs and use the ideas to make up sentences using *must*, *mustn't* or *needn't*.**

1

- stay in the queue
- bring ID to make a deposit
- forget your bank card

.....*You must stay in the queue.*.....
.....
.....

At the bank



2

- leave your bags at the door
- buy a guidebook
- take photos

.....
.....
.....

At the museum

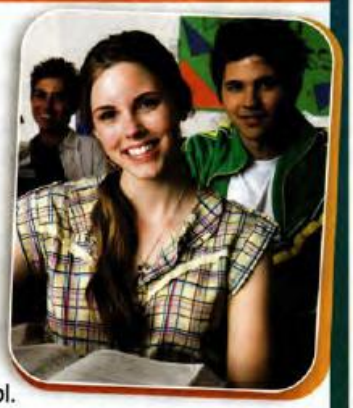


14 **Fill in *must* / *mustn't* or *may*.**

PARK HILL Secondary School

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School Information – Rules



Attendance

1 Students ....*must*.... be on time for all their classes.
2 Students ..... leave class without the teacher's permission.
3 If a student is absent for more than two days, he/she ..... provide a doctor's note.

Dress Code

4 Students ..... wear their uniform to school.
5 Students ..... wear jewellery or make-up.

Electronic devices

6 Students ..... turn off their mobile phones while in school.
7 Students ..... bring MP3 players or any other musical devices to class.

General Rules

8 Students ..... respect everyone.
9 Students ..... run in the corridors because they ..... get hurt.
10 Students ..... consume food or drink in the library.

15 **Fill in the gaps with *needn't have* or *didn't have to* and the correct form of the verbs in brackets.**

1 We were just going for a walk so I .....*didn't have to take*..... **(take)** any money with me.
2 You ..... **(wait)** for us, Dad. We could have taken the bus home.
3 I ..... **(do)** my homework yesterday because today is a holiday.
4 You ..... **(come)** all the way here to tell me. You could have called me on my mobile phone.
5 You ..... **(take out)** the rubbish. It was your brother's turn to do it.
6 Jakob ..... **(get)** the bus because Roger offered to give him a lift.

16 **Match the items in column A to their synonyms in column B.**

1	*f*	You should / ought to ...	a You aren't allowed to ...
2		You must ...	b It wasn't necessary for us to ... (but we did)
3		Shall we ...?	c Why don't we ...?
4		You needn't ...	d He managed to ...
5		We needn't have ...	e It wasn't necessary for us to ...
6		We didn't need to ...	f You had better ...
7		You mustn't ...	g I'm sure she's ...
8		He was able to ...	h You are obliged to ...
9		She must be ...	i It isn't necessary for you to ...
10		He can't be ...	j I'm sure he isn't ...

17 Underline the correct modal verb.

1 You **must** / **may** always do what the captain tells you to do.
2 You **should** / **shouldn't** know how to swim.
3 You **don't have to** / **mustn't** go sailing without a life jacket – you **should** / **might** fall into the water and drown.
4 Before you go out, always check the forecast – you **may** / **must** run into bad weather.
5 Tell someone where you're going – you **must** / **might** get into trouble.



6 Always wear your sunglasses and apply sunscreen as you **should** / **could** easily get sunburn.
7 The boat **might** / **should** have a fire extinguisher and a first aid kit on board in case of an emergency.

18 Choose the correct item.

1 ..... you lend me some money, please?
A Should (B) Could C Must
2 You ..... take things without asking.
A mustn't B couldn't C needn't
3 Sergei ..... to win the race after training hard.
A can B should C was able
4 You ..... feed the dog. I've already done it.
A couldn't B don't have to C can't
5 Sally didn't ..... to stop at the supermarket, so she went straight home after work.
A need B must C ought
6 You can go out but you ..... be back by 11:00 pm.
A can B might C must
7 You ..... have bought a ticket. I had an extra one.
A couldn't B mustn't C needn't
8 You ..... to see your doctor for a check-up.
A should B ought C may
9 Mr Wilson ..... to have an operation immediately.
A must B should C needs
10 That ..... be Elisha. She's still in Rome.
A needn't B can't C mustn't

19 Fill in the correct modal verb. There can be more than one answer.

• would (like) • shall • could • ~~can~~ • may / might



20 Read the text below and choose the correct modal verb for each space.

SPACE CAMP



Have you ever dreamt about becoming an astronaut or wondered what it 1) ..A.. feel like being weightless? Does flying through the air like Superman sound like fun? If your answer to these questions is yes, then you 2) ..... join us at Space Camp! Our special aeroplanes will take you on the ride of your life – one where you will be floating around in the air!

But that's just the beginning of the fun! At Space Camp you 3) ..... try on real spacesuits. Not only that, every night you 4) ..... to gaze at the universe in close-up on our powerful telescope. On clear nights, you 5) ..... be lucky enough to see Pluto!

Of course, astronauts 6) ..... go into space without proper training and who better to train you than a REAL astronaut? That's right, at Space Camp you will meet professional astronauts, who 7) ..... to answer all your questions about what life in space is really like!

So what are you waiting for? Places are limited, so book today! You 8) ..... visit our website at www.spacecamp.com if you want further information.

1	(A) must	B shall	C need
2	A ought	B should	C might
3	A would	B can	C might
4	A can	B must	C will be able
5	A should	B must	C may
6	A needn't	B mightn't	C can't
7	A will be able	B can	C could
8	A need	B can	C shall

21 Rephrase the sentences using modal verbs.

1 **Would you like me to** carry your books?
Can / Could / Shall / May I carry your books?
2 **I advise you to** rewrite your essay.
.....
3 **It is necessary for you to** be on time.
.....
4 **I'm sure Frank is** in his room.
.....
5 **How about going** to the cinema this evening?
.....
6 **I'm certain he isn't** with Bill. He just called me.
.....
7 **She managed to** save enough money to buy a new car.
.....
8 **You are not allowed to** use the pool after dark.
.....
9 **I advise you to** discuss the problem with your parents.
.....
10 I'm on my way out. **Do you want me to** get you anything?
.....
11 **It's forbidden to** park here.
.....
12 **It isn't necessary for you to** work on Saturdays.
.....
13 **Perhaps Bob will** go to Greece for the summer.
.....
14 **It's OK to** borrow my bike.
.....
15 **It wasn't necessary for Toby to** read all these books for the exam.
.....
16 **He is obliged to** wear a uniform at work.
.....
17 **Would you like me to** help you with the preparations?
.....
18 **You'd better** go home now before it starts raining.
.....
19 **All students are allowed to** use the library.
.....
20 **Do I have your permission to** use your laptop?
.....

22 Underline the correct word.

1 A: You **mustn't** / **don't have to** / **can't** bring your camera. I'll take mine.
B: Oh, that's great!
2 A: I don't feel well.
B: I think you **can** / **should** / **may** call the doctor.
3 A: Are you coming over to my house this afternoon?
B: Sorry. I really **should** / **may** / **will** get home early today.
4 A: Why do you think Ben and Elisha are late?
B: Well, they **might** / **can** / **should** have missed the 4 o'clock bus.
5 A: Did you find Michael?
B: Yes, but **I wasn't able to** / **shouldn't** / **mustn't** persuade him to join the Science club.
6 A: **Could** / **Would** / **Will** you like to order a takeaway?
B: Actually, I really feel like going out tonight.



Speaking Activity

(talking about obligation / prohibition / giving permission)

Read the swimming pool rules. Then, in pairs, make sentences about the rules, using the appropriate modals *can*, *must* or *mustn't*.

POOL RULES

- No food or drink is allowed in the pool area.
- Everyone has to take a shower before using the pool.
- Pets are not allowed in the pool area.
- Swimming goggles and soft balls are allowed.
- No yelling or loud music is permitted.
- Diving is only allowed from the diving boards.
- No running or pushing is allowed.



Pool Hours: 9 am to 6 pm

A: *You mustn't bring food or drink into the pool area.*
B: *You must take a shower before using the pool, etc.*