

Modal Verbs

Son verbos especiales con unas características comunes:

- No cambian en la 3ª persona del singular.
- Necesitan ir acompañados de otro verbo, el cual va siempre en su forma base, sin la partícula “to”. (“Work”.... No “to work”).
- No usan verbos auxiliares para sus conjugaciones.

Los verbos modales que estudiamos son:

- 1) Can – can’t.
- 2) Could – couldn’t
- 3) Should – shouldn’t
- 4) Must – mustn’t.
- 5) Have to – don’t have to.

1. Can / Can’t

Es un tipo de verbo modal, y esto significa que es un verbo especial con unas características particulares. Los verbos modales necesitan ir siempre acompañados de otro verbo, el cual se añade en su forma base sin la partícula “to”. Es decir, cuando usamos el verbo modal can, siempre tenemos que poner otro verbo más: por ejemplo, el verbo “to work”, pero sólo añadimos “work”.

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I can work	I can’t work	Can I work?
You can work	You can’t work	Can you work?
He can work	He can’t work	Can he work?
She can work	She can’t work	Can she work?
It can work	It can’t work	Can it work?
We can work	We can’t work	Can we work?
You can work	You can’t work	Can you work?
They can work	They can’t work	Can they work?

Usos del verbo CAN:

- 1) Para expresar la habilidad o capacidad para hacer algo. Saber hacer algo.
She can swim very well.
I can play the piano.
- 2) Para expresar la posibilidad de hacer algo. Poder hacer algo.
You can go to the cinema.
You can study this for tomorrow.
- 3) Para expresar permiso. Poder hacer algo. (Se usa mucho en interrogativa)
Can I help you?
Can I go to the bathroom?

2. Could / Couldn't

Es el pasado del verbo modal can, por lo que expresa habilidad y posibilidad en el pasado.

She could read when she was four.

In the past, robots couldn't play music.

Se usa para expresar algo posible pero poco probable. *He could be at home.* O para expresar una habilidad (natural o aprendida) que se tuvo en el pasado. *She could run very fast when she was a girl.*

También lo podemos utilizar para pedir permiso en frases interrogativas, y queda de una forma más educada que utilizando can.

Could you help me, please?

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I could read	I couldn't read	Could I read...?
You could read	You couldn't read	Could you read..?
He could read	He couldn't read	Could he read...?
She could read	She couldn't read	Could she read...?
It could read	It couldn't read	Could it read...?
We could read	We couldn't read	Could we read...?
You could read	You couldn't read	Could you read...?
They could read	They couldn't read	Could they read...?

Verb: _____

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I	I	I ?
You	You	you ?
He	He	he ?
She	She	she ?
It	It	it ?
We	We	we ?
You	You	you ?
They	They	they ?

3. Should / Shouldn't

Utilizamos este verbo modal para dar consejos o indicar lo que se debería hacer, tanto en afirmativa como en negativa.

You should wear glasses.

You shouldn't be here.

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I should go	I shouldn't go	Should I go...?
You should go	You shouldn't go	Should you go...?
He should go	He shouldn't go	Should he go...?
She should go	She shouldn't go	Should she go...?
It should go	It shouldn't go	Should it go...?
We should go	We shouldn't go	Should we go...?
You should go	You shouldn't go	Should you go?
They should go	They shouldn't go	Should they go...?

Verb: _____

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I	I	I ?
You	You	you ?
He	He	he ?
She	She	she ?
It	It	it ?
We	We	we ?
You	You	you ?
They	They	they ?

4. Must / Mustn't

Es otro tipo de verbo modal, y esto significa que es un verbo especial con unas características particulares. Los verbos modales necesitan ir siempre acompañados de otro verbo, el cual se añade en su forma base sin la partícula "to". Es decir, cuando usamos el verbo modal can, siempre tenemos que poner otro verbo más: por ejemplo, el verbo "to work", pero sólo añadimos "work".

Como verás, se conjuga igual que el modal can /can't. Lo importante es conocer bien su significado y sus usos, porque de ello depende que se use un modal u otro.

En afirmativa normalmente expresa la obligación o necesidad fuerte de hacer algo, pues significa "deber". *You must use the diskette.*

En negativa tiene un significado totalmente distinto ya que expresa prohibición, algo que no está permitido o algo que no se debe hacer por no ser conveniente o correcto hacerlo. *You mustn't use the phone.*

Must y mustn't puede usarse también para dar consejos. *You mustn't give up.*

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I must use	I mustn't use	Must I use...?
You must use	You mustn't use	Must you use...?
He must use	He mustn't use	Must he use...?
She must use	She mustn't use	Must she use...?
It must use	It mustn't use	Must it use...?
We must use	We mustn't use	Must we use...?
You must use	You mustn't use	Must you use...?
They must use	They mustn't use	Must they use...?

Verb:

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I	I	I ?
You	You	you ?
He	He	he ?
She	She	she ?
It	It	it ?
We	We	we ?
You	You	you ?
They	They	they ?

5. Have to / Don't have to

Es otro tipo de verbo modal, y esto significa que es un verbo especial con unas características particulares. Los verbos modales necesitan ir siempre acompañados de otro verbo, el cual se añade en su forma base sin la partícula “to”. Es decir, cuando usamos el verbo modal can, siempre tenemos que poner otro verbo más: por ejemplo, el verbo “to work”, pero sólo añadimos “work”.

El uso de este verbo modal en su forma afirmativa (have to) implica que es necesario hacer algo, bien porque una norma lo establece, o bien porque las circunstancias obligan a ello. En su forma negativa (don't have to) indica que no hay necesidad de hacer algo.

*In Great Britain, people **have to** drive on the left.*

*We **don't have to** walk far to school. (Because we live near it)*

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I have to read	I don't have to read	Have I got to read...?
You have to read	You don't have to read	Have you got to read..?
He has to read	He doesn't have to read	Has he got to read...?
She has to read	She doesn't have to read	Has she got to read...?
It has to read	It doesn't have to read	Has it got to read...?
We have to read	We don't have to read	Have we got to read...?
You have to read	You don't have to read	Have you got to read...?
They have to read	They don't have to read	Have they got to read...?

Verb: _____

Affirmative	Negative	Interrogative
I	I	I ?
You	You	you ?
He	He	he ?
She	She	she ?
It	It	it ?
We	We	we ?
You	You	you ?
They	They	they ?

1) Complete the sentences with **can/can't/could/couldn't** + the following verbs:
come **eat** **hear** **run** **sleep** **wait**

1. I'm afraid you can't come to your party next week.
2. When Tim was 16, he _____ 100 metres in 11 seconds.
3. "Are you in a hurry?" "No, I've got plenty of time. I _____."
4. I was feeling sick yesterday. I _____ anything.
5. Can you speak a little louder? I _____ you very well.
6. "You look tired" "Yes, I _____ last night."

2) Complete the sentences with **could/couldn't** :

1. Laura had hurt her leg and _____ walk very well.
2. I looked very carefully and I see _____ see somebody in the distance.
3. My grandmother loved music. She _____ play the piano very well.
4. I had forgotten to bring my camera, so I _____ take any photos.

3) Complete the sentences with **can, can't, could or couldn't**

1. I _____ play the guitar.
2. You _____ write this for homework.
3. He _____ jump very high when he was a boy.
4. _____ I help you, Sir?
5. In the past, robots _____ play music.

4) Complete the sentences with **you should** + the following verbs:

eat **go** **take** **visit** **watch** **wear**

1. When you play tennis, you should watch the ball.
2. It's late and you're very tired. _____ go to bed.
3. _____ plenty of fruit and vegetables.
4. If you have time, _____ the Science Museum.
5. When you're driving, _____ a seat belt.

5) Complete the sentences using **must** + these verbs:

be eat go learn meet wash win

1. I'm very hungry. I must eat something.
2. Marilyn is a very interesting person. You _____ her.
3. My hands are dirty. I _____ them.
4. You _____ to drive. It will be very useful.
5. I _____ to the post office. I need some stamps.
6. The game tomorrow is very important for us. We _____.
7. You can't always have things immediately. You _____ be patient.

6) Complete the sentences using **should**, **shouldn't**, **must** or **mustn't**

1. You _____ use the phone in the car.
2. You _____ study a lot more.
3. You _____ be sad.
4. You _____ sleep 10 hours a day.
5. You _____ wear glasses for reading.

7) Complete the sentences using **have/has to** + these verbs:

do hit read speak travel wear

1. My eyes are not very good. I have to wear glasses.
2. At the end of the course, all the students _____ a test.
3. Sarah is studying literature. She _____ a lot of books.
4. Albert doesn't understand much English. You _____ slowly to him.
5. Kate is not often at home. She _____ a lot in her job.
6. In tennis you _____ the ball over the net.

Modal Verb Exercises I

Fill in the blanks in each sentence using a modal verb, such as *can, could, would, should, might, may, must, or have to*, based on the situational hints shown in italics. Select the modal that seems most appropriate for the situation described, and be prepared to explain your choice.

1. I not know what to say to him if he showed up.
(I'm unprepared to speak to him.)
2. She look at things differently once the facts are in.
(A change in opinion is possible after all the information becomes available.)
3. It's company policy; you do it this way or your expenses won't be reimbursed.
(The company requires that this procedure be followed for expense reimbursements.)
4. I'm in terrible shape! I exercise more!
(I've decided that more exercise is an absolute necessity for me.)
5. you get this report done for us by tomorrow morning?
(Are you willing and able to prepare this report by tomorrow if we ask you?)
6. you handle this much work on a regular basis?
(Do you have the capacity to handle this much work regularly?)
7. We were worried about you. You have called us as soon as you knew you'd be late.
(Calling someone when you will be late is a good idea, in my opinion.)
8. You want to think a little more carefully about that before trying it next time.
(I think you were stupid not to think more carefully about it.)
9. This computer's not working. It have been damaged by the thunderstorm.
(The damage is a logical deduction based on the information available.)
10. Ellen be sent to London this summer, if the board decides that the situation there warrants it.
(The trip is certainly possible, but whether or not she goes depends on the board's preference.)
11. My trainer says I'm in terrible shape. According to him I exercise more.
(My trainer is trying to compel me to exercise more.)
12. You always try reinstalling Windows, that might work if the disk is corrupt.
(This is one possible course of action, and there's a possibility of it working under certain conditions.)
13. I not do that if I were you!
(I don't think your behavior is prudent, and my own normal behavior is different.)
14. When she was young, she play tennis every single day, rain or shine.
(She did this habitually when she was young, although she doesn't necessarily do it now.)
15. I suggest this dark blue jacket?
(You're a customer in my upscale store, and I'm trying to be very polite.)
16. I admit, it's a very nice-looking car.
(I have no choice but to admit that the car looks nice.)
17. She admit that it was a very nice-looking car.
(She had no choice but to admit that the car looked nice.)
18. I think not!
(I find that absolutely impossible to believe.)
19. we be required to ditch the aircraft, there are flotation devices under your seats.
(There are live-saving devices under your seats for use if we ditch in water.)
20. You say that.
(That's another correct way of summarizing the situation.)

Modal Verb Exercises I - Key

These are the most likely choices for the modal verbs. When more than one is listed, they are listed in order of decreasing politeness and/or increasing probability. In some cases there may be other answers besides those shown here, although not usually without a significant change in meaning.

1. I **would** not know what to say to him if he showed up.
(I'm unprepared to speak to him.)
2. She **Might/May** look at things differently once the facts are in.
(A change in opinion is possible after all the information becomes available.)
3. It's company policy; you **have to** do it this way or your expenses won't be reimbursed.
(The company requires that this procedure be followed for expense reimbursements.)
4. I'm in terrible shape! I **must** exercise more!
(I've decided that more exercise is an absolute necessity for me.)
5. **Could** you get this report done for us by tomorrow morning?
(Are you willing and able to prepare this report by tomorrow if we ask you?)
6. **Can** you handle this much work on a regular basis?
(Do you have the capacity to handle this much work regularly?)
7. We were worried about you. You **should** have called us as soon as you knew you'd be late.
(Calling someone when you will be late is a good idea, in my opinion.)
8. You **might** want to think a little more carefully about that before trying it next time.
(I think you were stupid not to think more carefully about it.)
9. This computer's not working. It **must** have been damaged by the thunderstorm.
(The damage is a logical deduction based on the information available.)
10. Ellen **may** be sent to London this summer, if the board decides that the situation there warrants it.
(The trip is certainly possible, but whether or not she goes depends on the board's preference.)
11. My trainer says I'm in terrible shape. According to him I **have to** exercise more.
(My trainer is trying to compel me to exercise more.)
12. You **could** always try reinstalling Windows, that might work if the disk is corrupt.
(This is one possible course of action, and there's a possibility of it working under certain conditions.)
13. I **would** not do that if I were you!
(I don't think your behavior is prudent, and my own normal behavior is different.)
14. When she was young, she **would** play tennis every single day, rain or shine.
(She did this habitually when she was young, although she doesn't necessarily do it now.)
15. **Might/May/Could/Can** I suggest this dark blue jacket?
(You're a customer in my upscale store, and I'm trying to be very polite.)
16. I **must** admit, it's a very nice-looking car.
(I have no choice but to admit that the car looks nice.)
17. She **had to** admit that it was a very nice-looking car.
(She had no choice but to admit that the car looked nice.)
18. I **should** think not!
(I find that absolutely impossible to believe.)
19. **Should** we be required to ditch the aircraft, there are flotation devices under your seats.
(There are live-saving devices under your seats for use if we ditch in water.)
20. You **could** say that.
(That's another correct way of summarizing the situation.)