

Modal Verbs

Can is a modal verb used to express ability and possibility. However, *can't* is a modal verb used to express inability and impossibility. Read the examples below:

Can	Can't
Ability • <i>I can swim well.</i> • <i>She can play computer games.</i> • <i>He can speak Spanish fluently.</i>	Inability • <i>I can't swim underwater well.</i> • <i>She can't play tennis.</i> • <i>He can't speak English fluently.</i>
Possibility • <i>You can learn to play basketball at a summer camp.</i> • <i>We can go to the cinema in July.</i>	Impossibility • <i>You can't learn to play hockey at a summer camp.</i> • <i>Due to the covid-19 pandemic, we can't go to the cinema now.</i>

Must is a modal verb used to express obligation, while *mustn't* is a modal verb used to express prohibition. Read the examples below:

Must	Mustn't
Obligation • <i>You must do your homework.</i> • <i>People must do their best at work.</i>	Prohibition • <i>People mustn't smoke at the cinema.</i> • <i>"You mustn't come home late", the mother said to her son.</i>

Notice: *can* and *must* are modal verbs, so you **don't** add "-s" to the third person singular when using them (*She plays the piano* ≠ *She can play the piano*).

Modal Verbs

Exercises

✚ Choose one of the following modal verbs and fill in the blanks.

Can, can't, must, mustn't, can't, can

- ❖ Sarah _____ play the guitar, she does very well.
- ❖ Martin _____ skate very well, he should practice a lot.
- ❖ Richard's cousin _____ drive a car. He wants to learn next year.
- ❖ Berta is a polyglot, she _____ speak four languages.
- ❖ I _____ study hard to get good grades and learn a lot.
- ❖ People _____ smoke cigarettes, it is bad for health.

✚ Write sentences about what you can and can't do. Consider the examples.

> speak Spanish fluently ⁽¹⁾	> ride a bike ⁽⁴⁾	> play hockey ⁽⁷⁾
> speak English fluently ⁽²⁾	> drive a car ⁽⁵⁾	> play football ⁽⁸⁾
> bake a cake ⁽³⁾	> swim well ⁽⁶⁾	> play computer games ⁽⁹⁾

1. I can speak Spanish fluently.
2. I can't speak English fluently.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.
6. _____.
7. _____.
8. _____.
9. _____.

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✚ Write sentences about what you must and mustn't do. Consider the examples.

> fasten your seat belt ⁽¹⁾	> drink alcohol ⁽³⁾	> study hard ⁽⁵⁾
> watch TV a lot ⁽²⁾	> eat too much candy ⁽⁴⁾	> be polite ⁽⁶⁾

1. In the car, I must fasten my seat belt.
2. I mustn't watch TV a lot.
3. _____.
4. _____.
5. _____.
6. _____.