

Modal verbs help us talk about the moods that we want to give to our sentences. Four can go in *both* groups!

1) Decide into which of the two categories – or both! – the modals can go, and “tick” the correct boxes.

predicting
possible
probable
impossible improbable

suggesting
duty
obligation

predicting
possible
probable
impossible improbable

suggesting
duty
obligation

_____	_____	can		_____	_____	had better
_____	_____	have to		_____	_____	might
_____	_____	would		_____	_____	ought to
_____	_____	must		_____	_____	could
_____	_____	shall		_____	_____	may
_____	_____	will		_____	_____	should
_____	_____	have to		_____	_____	needn't



Do this first page BEFORE going on to the next pages!!!



2) Let's do the "possibility/probability" category, first. CLICK on these modal verbs, DRAG them to the correct boxes on the line, then DROP them.

can	might	will	could	may	would	shall
WEAKEST						STRONGEST

*In formal English, we use "may" for permission and possibility, while we use "can" for ability. In informal/everyday English, many use "can" for "may."

**American English uses "will" for all personal pronouns; British English can use "shall" for first person singular and plural for asking for a decision.

3. **SHOW OFF TIME!** Use your new knowledge about (im)possibilities and (im)probabilities for ticking the correct answers:

- a. There's a very slim chance that she will / might finish that book by noon, today. 
- b. My friend told me that when she turned two years old, she said to herself, "Now, I can / may lift that chair." 
- c. There's a relatively good chance that it could / might rain, tonight.

4. You can speculate and predict about possibilities and probabilities using a few of these, too: might, could, and must. Their strengths from SURE to UNSURE are the same as above. Choose the correct answers from the pull-down menus.

- a. The postman comes every day at 3:30 PM sharp. It's 3:30 PM. I hear the bell. It.....
- b. The postman comes every day around 3:30 PM. It's about 3:15 PM. I hear the bell. It.....
- c. The postman comes every day around 3:30 PM. It's only 2:30 PM. I hear the bell. It.....



5) Let's do the "suggestion/obligation/duty" category, first. CLICK on these modal verbs*, DRAG them to the correct boxes on the line, then DROP them. NOTE: WEAKEST is on the right, STRONGEST is on the left.

ought to	needn't	had better	could	have to	must	should	shall
STRONGEST				WEAKEST			

*For suggestions with a LITTLE bit of guilt, you can also say, "It would be great, if you would/could..."



6. SHOW OFF TIME! Use your new knowledge to choose the correct answers from the pull-down menus:

- a. "Oh, you have an afternoon off? You... go see Auntie B."

- b. "Oh well, I haven't been to see Auntie B. for awhile, so I guess I... go see her."
- c. "Oh dear, I haven't been to see Auntie B. for awhile, so I guess I... go see her."
- d. "Oh no! I haven't been to see Auntie B. for awhile, so I guess I... go see her."
- e. "I miss Auntie B. I really... go see her."
- f. "Mom says that I... go see Auntie B."

7. Here's more fun stuff that we can do with modals. Remember that some of the simple conditionals can also function as a PAST TENSE. When we use them this way, it's usually for PAST HABITS, PREDICTING FUTURE HABITS BASED ON THE PAST, or for the FUTURE IN THE PAST.

Try them out by TICKING the correct answers for these questions:



- a. "Oh, you! You... ☐ would write / ☐ would have written that!"
- b. When he grew up, little Manzoni... ☐ would write / ☐ would have written an Italian classic.
- c. When a boy, Leopardi... ☐ would always write / ☐ would have always written poems.
- d. Had he had the time, D'Annunzio... ☐ would only write / ☐ would only have written plays.

8. We use simple past conditional (ex., **would like**) or composite past conditional (ex., **would have liked**) modals to talk about preferences. You can also use "**want**" in English (*it's strong, but not as strong as in some other languages*) when you want to be more matter-of-fact (to soften requests, use *please!*); or "**hope**" when it's

not sure, but possible; or “**wish**” when it’s desired, but impossible. When you want to be polite, but firm, you can say “**would rather**” (*it gives a sense of guilt to the enforcer!*). **HINT: DON’T** confuse “**would like to**” (*preference*) with “**would**” (*possible, based on a condition*)! Click on the pull-down menu, & choose the right options:



- a. Yes, thanks, I...a second piece of cake.
- b. A movie or dinner out? He...see a movie (than go out for dinner).
- c. She had to stay late. She...left, earlier (than stay late).
- d. Star...go to India, this Christmas.
- e.come with us to the movies?
- f.come with us to the movies, if it were a movie you want to see?
- g. I really...but I have to go let my dog out. Sorry!
- h. You...to go to your favorite vacation place. You’ve saved enough money.
- i. POP QUIZ ☺: The best way to say there’s an about 40% chance something will happen is... ..
- j. POP QUIZ ☺: The best “no-guilt” way to make a suggestion is... ..
- k. POP QUIZ ☺: The best way to tell someone your boss is making you do it is... ..

WORD CLOUDS: Created by S.K. Meyer using the free program <https://www.wordclouds.com/>, 22 Oct 2020
The CLIPART images used to create this file were available in the Microsoft Word program used to create it.