



can - could - may - will - would
must - have to - need (to) - can't



Grammar

Can, could, may, will, would, must, need, etc. are **modal verbs** and:

- they do not form all the tenses.
- they are the same in all persons, singular and plural.
- they form the interrogative and the negative without auxiliary verbs (**do/did**).
- they are followed by the **base form of a verb, without to**.

a can/could/may/will/would

We use **Can I..?, Could I..?, May I..?:**

- to ask for, give or refuse **permission**.
Can/Could/May I go to the park, Mum?
Yes, you can/may. No, you can't/may not.
- to make polite requests and offer help.
Can/Could/May I have some more tea?
Can/Could/May I get you some coffee?

We use **Can/Could/Will/Would you...?:**

- to make polite requests or ask for a **favour**.
Could and **Would** are more polite.
Can/Could/Will/Would you give me a lift?



b must / have to / can't

We use **must**:

- in the affirmative and interrogative to express **obligation** in the present and future.
I must give James a call. Must we go so soon?
- in the negative to express **prohibition**.
You mustn't use more than 15 GBs a month.

We use **have to**:

- in the affirmative and interrogative to express **obligation** in the present and future.
You have to wear a uniform. Do you have to work on Saturdays?
- in the negative to express **absence of obligation**.
She doesn't have to pick up if she doesn't recognise the telephone number.

NOTE:

- **Must** expresses an obligation that the speaker imposes on himself/herself or others.
Have to expresses an obligation that is imposed by somebody or something else.
- **Must** and **have to** form the Past with **had to/didn't have to** and the Future with **will have to/won't have to**. The affirmative expresses obligation and the negative absence of obligation in the past or the future respectively.
*Kate didn't have to go to school yesterday because she was ill.
You must prepare your presentation tonight because you will have to give it at 9 a.m. tomorrow.*
- To express prohibition, we can also use **can't**.
You can't use your mobile phone in the hospital.



c need (to)

We use **need**:

- as a **main verb** in all tenses in the affirmative, interrogative and negative. It is followed by a **full infinitive** and forms the interrogative and negative with **auxiliary verbs** (do/does, did etc.)
- as a **modal verb** in the interrogative and negative of the **Present Simple** only. It is followed by a **bare infinitive** and forms the interrogative and negative without **auxiliary verbs**.

Affirmative	Negative	Questions
I need to go	I don't need to go I needn't go	Do I need to go? Need I go?
He/She/It needs to go	He/She/It doesn't need to go He/She/It needn't go	Does he/she/it need to go? Need he/she/it go?
We/You/They need to go	We/You/They don't need to go We/You/They needn't go	Do we/you/they need to go? Need we/you/they go?

We use **need**:

- in the affirmative and interrogative to express **necessity**.
I need to talk to Jane.
- in the negative to express **absence of necessity**.
You don't need to buy anything.
She needn't catch the bus. She can take the underground instead.



Activities



A. Circle the correct words.

1. **Could** / **May** you get me a newspaper when you go out?
2. **A: Will** / **Can** I go shopping with my friends, Mum?
B: No, you **won't** / **can't** . You've got lots of homework to do.
3. **A:** Please remember that you **must** / **need** be here by 2 p.m.
B: OK. I'll **must** / **have to** leave work earlier.
4. **A: Would** / **May** you mind teaching me how to drive?
B: I'm sorry, I **may not** / **can't** . You're too young to drive.
5. **A: Could** / **May** you leave a message, please?
B: Sure. Please, tell Mr Smith that his car is ready.
6. **A:** Excuse me, **may** / **would** I take this bag with me on the plane?
B: Of course you **would** / **may** , sir.
7. **A:** Jenny, when can I borrow your camera? I really **need** / **need to** it.
B: I **must** / **can** give it to you on Monday, and you **don't have to** / **mustn't** give it back for another week or so.
8. **A: Do I need** / **Need I** wash the car today?
B: Yes! It's very dirty!
9. **A: Can** / **Will** I give you a lift?
B: Thanks, Harry.



B. Complete the dialogues using the words in the box.



would need have to

1. A: I _____ some help. _____ you mind helping me?

B: Oh, I'm sorry, I'm too busy. I _____ finish this project in two hours.



need to can't could can

2. A: I _____ drive you home if you like.

B: That's very kind of you, but I _____ buy some things from the supermarket. _____ you drive me there first?

A: I'm afraid I _____. I'm in a hurry.

C. Circle the correct words.

- Maria **has to** / **needs** be home by midnight.
- You **mustn't** / **don't have to** eat if you aren't hungry.
- You've got all day tomorrow to return Betty's call. You **mustn't** / **don't need** to talk to her tonight.
- Sheila **must** / **have to** take her medicine.
- You **needn't** / **don't have** cook tonight. We're eating out.
- We **need** / **must** to buy our bus tickets.
- The office is closed tomorrow so I **mustn't** / **don't have to** get up early.
- Thanks a lot for the present, but you **had to** / **didn't have to** buy me anything.
- You **mustn't** / **don't have to** go for the 128rX mobile phone. It's much too expensive.