

## 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
<b>Ability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I can swim well.</i></li><li>• <i>She can play computer games.</i></li><li>• <i>He can speak Spanish fluently.</i></li></ul>	<b>Inability</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>I can't swim underwater well.</i></li><li>• <i>She can't play tennis.</i></li><li>• <i>He can't speak English fluently.</i></li></ul>
<b>Possibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>You can learn to play basketball at a summer camp.</i></li><li>• <i>We can go to the cinema in July.</i></li></ul>	<b>Impossibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>You can't learn to play hockey at a summer camp.</i></li><li>• <i>Due to the covid-19 pandemic, we can't go to the cinema now.</i></li></ul>

*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
<b>Obligation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>You must do your homework.</i></li><li>• <i>People must do their best at work.</i></li></ul>	<b>Prohibition</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>People mustn't smoke at the cinema.</i></li><li>• <i>"You mustn't come home late", the mother said to her son.</i></li></ul>

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*).

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

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 <sup>(1)</sup>	> drink alcohol <sup>(3)</sup>	> study hard <sup>(5)</sup>
> watch TV a lot <sup>(2)</sup>	> eat too much candy <sup>(4)</sup>	> be polite <sup>(6)</sup>

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