

Modal Verbs



Modal verbs are quite different from other verbs:

- They must be used with another verb in the infinitive;
- They don't take 'S' in the 3rd person singular;
- They don't have past and future forms.

CAN
COULD
MUST
OUGHT TO
MAY
MIGHT
SHOULD

CAN - ability → Kate can swim. / permission → You can go out tonight.
request → Can I go out tonight? / possibility → That can be a good idea.

COULD - past ability → He could already play the piano when he was 10.
polite request → Could you step aside, please?
possibility → That could work.

MUST - obligation → You must study for the test. / logical deduction → He must be at home.

OUGHT TO - moral obligation → You ought to obey your parents.

MAY - request → May I come in? / permission → Yes, you may. / possibility → It may rain.

MIGHT - possibility → The plane might be late.

SHOULD - advice → You should go on a diet.

1. Fill in the blanks with **CAN** or **MUST**. Decide whether to use the affirmative or the negative form.

- John is just a baby, so he _____ walk.
- Kate _____ sing very well; she's an excellent singer.
- Cats _____ swim.
- Children _____ obey their parents.
- They _____ misbehave.
- You _____ study if you want to get good marks.
- _____ you please open the window? It's too hot in here.
- Vivian and Fran _____ find their keys anywhere!
- You _____ make illegal downloads.
- Only rich people _____ afford designer clothes.

2. Fill in the blanks with **MUST**, **MAY** and **SHOULD**. Decide whether to use the affirmative or the negative form.

- You _____ read the instructions before using this product.
- You _____ smoke so much: it's bad for your health!
- If we leave now, we _____ arrive on time.
- _____ I use your pen? I can't find mine.
- You _____ pay attention in class.
- You _____ eat more fruit and vegetables if you want to lose weight.
- Children _____ watch TV for more than three hours a day.
- John _____ come to the party, but he isn't sure yet.
- You _____ eat so much fast food!

