



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.

- a) John is just a baby, so he _____ walk.
- b) Kate _____ sing very well; she's an excellent singer.
- c) Cats _____ swim.
- d) Children _____ obey their parents.
- e) They _____ misbehave.
- f) You _____ study if you want to get good marks.
- g) _____ you please open the window? It's too hot in here.
- h) Vivian and Fran _____ find their keys anywhere!
- i) You _____ make illegal downloads.
- j) 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.

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

