Modal verbs

Obligation/prohibition

MUST Obligation. Personal opinion. You decide.
***I must study more. You must clean the car.**
MUSTN'T Prohibition. Don't do it.
***You mustn't eat in the classroom.**
HAVE TO: Obligation. Law or rules.
***I have to** wear a uniform. (3rd person: **has to**)
DON'T HAVE TO: It's not necessary.
***I don't have to** work on Sundays.
Don't have to means the same as **NEEDN'T.**
PAST: I had to. FUTURE: I will have to.

Ability and permission

ABILITY: CAN
Present: Mary **can** drive.
Past: Mary **couldn't** drive when she was 12.
Future: Mary will **be able to** drive next year.
PERMISSION MAY/MIGHT CAN COULD
Asking for permission:
May/can/could I sit here, please?
Giving permission: You **can/may** use my phone.
Refusing permission: You **can't/may not** use it.
Request: Can/Could you pass the water, please?

Advice

Asking for advice. SHOULD
Should is not as strong as **must** or **have to.**
Should I buy this dress? What do you think?

Giving advice. SHOULD / OUGHT TO
Affirmative: You **should** help your mother.
Affirmative: You **ought to** help your mother.
Negative: You **shouldn't** eat unhealthy food.
Negative: You **ought not to** eat unhealthy food.

Deduction

Possibilities for the future: MAY/MIGHT/COULD
It **may/might/could** rain tomorrow.
I **may/might/could** go to Paris next month. (not sure)
Possible explanations: MAY/MIGHT/COULD
Judging by her accent she **may/might/could** be American but I am not sure.
Certainty: CAN'T/COULDN'T/MUST
Her French is bad. She **can't** be French.
He drives a Ferrari. He **must** be rich.

Modals of deduction and speculation with past participle

MUST HAVE-Deduction about something that has happened. You **must have** left your book in the classroom, you haven't been anywhere else and it's not in the car.
CAN'T HAVE-Deduction about something that didn't happen in the past based on present evidence. *You **can't have seen** Mark's sister. She lives in Canada and hasn't been to England for ages.
SHOULD HAVE-Something was desirable or needed but didn't happen.*I **should have called** you but I forgot.
NEEDN'T HAVE-Opposite to 'should have'. Something not necessary was done. You **needn't have bought** more potatoes. We've got plenty.
MIGHT/MAY/COULD HAVE-Something was possible in the past but we're not sure. *I think I saw your sister at the cinema last night but I **may/might/could be** wrong because it was very dark.

The perfect infinitive with modals

MODAL VERB + PERFECT INFINITIVE ((TO) HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE)

The perfect infinitive is often used after the modal auxiliary verbs to talk about unreal situations

COULD HAVE: I **could have bought** a nice house if I had saved enough money.
SHOULD HAVE: You **should have told** me that before but you didn't. You **shouldn't have kept** the secret.
WOULD HAVE: I **would have gone** to that private university If I had had enough money.
NEEDN'T HAVE: We **needn't have waited** for him (but we did).

Sometimes the perfect infinitive can express certainty.

*She **should have arrived** home by now. *They **will have arrived** home by now. They left so long ago.

Exercise to practise modal verbs

Fill the gaps with the correct modal verb in the correct tense. Sometimes more than one option is possible.

1-That woman _____ be Spanish but I am not sure. She sounds Spanish though.
2-What _____ I do? Do you think I should go to the party with Michael?
3-You _____ park here. You will get a parking fine if you do.
4-You _____ have called Sally. I have already called her.
5-I _____ speak English when I was young but now I _____.
6-You _____ wear a helmet if you ride a motorbike.
7-Mandy _____ go to Rome next year but she is not sure.
8-Take an umbrella. It _____ snow if the temperature goes down.
9-You _____ walk. I can give you a lift if you want.
10-You _____ seen that film. It's one of the best films I've ever seen.
11-I hope I _____ pass all my exams and go to university next year.
12-They _____ be out. All lights are off. We _____ come back tomorrow.
13-You _____ use your mobile phone at the cinema. Turn it off!
14-Mary _____ told me Peter has already got a girlfriend.
15-She _____ heard the phone ringing. She had her headphones on.
16-Tom told me he _____ swim when he was four. His parents taught him.
17-You _____ shout at me. I am not deaf!
18-He _____ go to the military service last year.
19-My car is filthy. I _____ wash it before the wedding.
20- Charles, do you think you _____ pass your driving test soon?
21-The meeting has finished. You _____ leave now if you are not feeling well.
22-Your eyes look red. You _____ been crying. What's wrong?
23-In my opinion you _____ visit your aunt. You haven't seen her for a long time.
24-Serena, _____ I use your mobile, please? I left mine in the office.
25-I _____ come with you if I had known George was there.
26-I _____ wear a uniform when I was a flight attendant.
27-Shelley _____ come for the weekend if she can book a flight.
28-Sorry Amanda. You _____ use my computer. You broke it last time you did.
29-You _____ speak Spanish here but English, otherwise you'll never learn.
30-Pat _____ be so stubborn and go to the doctor's when she's not well.
31-You _____ seen that film. They are still shooting it.
32-She's wearing a fur coat. It looks expensive. She _____ have a lot of money.
33-You _____ step on the grass. You are not allowed to.
34-We went to the theatre last night. You _____ have seen that play. It was great.
35-We _____ hurry to catch the train. We've got plenty of time.
36-You _____ be exhausted. You have been working all day non-stop.







