14 Modal Verbs

Listen and repeat. Then act out.

The modal verbs are: can, could, must, will, would, shall, may, should, etc. They have the same form in all persons. They come before the subject in questions and take 'not' after them in negations. They take the infinitive without 'to' after them.

Can she sing? No, she **can't** sing but she **can** dance.

Can – Could

Can is used to express ability in the present (= I am able to) or to ask for permission (= Is it OK if ... ?).

She **can** type. (ability in the present)
Can I use your pen? (asking for permission)

Could is used to express ability in the past (= I was able to), polite requests or to ask for permission politely (= Would it be alright if ... ?).

He **could** run fast when he was 17. (ability in the past)
Could I have some tea? (polite request)
Could I leave early, please? (asking for permission politely)

1 Circle the correct word.

1 (**Can**) / **Can't** I use your pencil, please?
2 You **can** / **can't** borrow my book. I need it.
3 Maria **can't** / **can** sing well. She's got a beautiful voice.
4 **Could** / **Couldn't** I have a glass of water?
5 Dan **couldn't** / **could** write at the age of one.
6 She **could** / **can** speak Spanish when she was fifteen.
7 John and Phil **could** / **can** play the piano. They're quite good at it, too.
8 **Could** / **Couldn't** I go to the cinema with Aya?

LIVEWORKSHEETS

2 Label the speech situations.

ability in the present	asking for permission	~~asking for permission politely~~
ability in the past	polite request (x 2)	

1 asking for permission politely

2 .....

3 .....

Could I use your phone?

They can swim so well.

Could you close the door, please?

4 .....

5 .....

6 .....

I could walk before the accident.

Can I sit here?

Could you help me, please?

3 Fill in the gaps with *can*, *can't*, *could* or *couldn't*.

1 Katherine is three years old. She ...can't... write yet.

2 ..... I use your computer, please?

3 Diane ..... go to the cinema with her friends yesterday. She had too much homework.

4 He ..... read from a very young age.

5 Alexa ..... drive now that she is eighteen.

6 I'm afraid you ..... use the printer right now. It's broken.

7 ..... Emma speak Italian when she was twelve?

8 My mum ..... cook very well. Everything she makes is delicious!

9 ..... I leave early today, Miss Julie?

10 The weather was terrible yesterday, so we ..... go to the beach.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

14 Modal Verbs

Must – Mustn't

We use must to express necessity (=it is necessary to) **or obligation** (=I'm obliged to).

It's raining. I **must** take my umbrella. (necessity)
I **must** tidy my room. (obligation)

We use must not/mustn't to show that something is forbidden or that someone is not allowed to do something.

You **mustn't** eat in class.

4 **Look at the pictures and fill in the gaps with *must* or *mustn't*.**

1 You ...must... recycle glass here.

2 You ..... ride your bike here.

3 You ..... park here.

4 You ..... drive slow.

5 You ..... stop.

6 You ..... throw your rubbish here.

Have to – Don't have to

We use have to to express necessity (=it is necessary to). **We can not choose to do something else. It is obligatory.**

Nurses **have to** wear a uniform at work.

We use don't / doesn't have to to express lack of necessity (=it is not necessary to).

You **don't have to** do the ironing. I did it yesterday.

LIVEWORKSHEETS