



Modal verbs



Modal verbs: ability and possibility; obligation and prohibition

Modal verb	Expressing	Example
Must	Strong obligation	You must stop when traffic lights turn red.
	Logical conclusion/ certainty	He must be very tired. He's been working all day long.
Must not	Prohibition	You must not smoke in the hospital.
Can	Ability	I can sing.
	Permission	Can I borrow your pen, please?
	Possibility	Smoking can cause cancer.
Could	Ability in the past	When I was a kid I could run very fast.
	Polite permission	Excuse me, could I say something?
	Possibility	It could snow tomorrow!
May	Permission	May I use your phone, please?
	Possibility, probability	It may be a better day tomorrow.

Might	Possibility, probability	I might go on holiday to Vienna.
Have to	Need / 50% obligation	You have to study for your test.
Should/ ought to	50% obligation	I should/ought to see a doctor. My headache is terrible.
	Advice	You should/ought to pay attention. The test is tomorrow.
	Logical conclusion	He should/ ought to be very tired. He's been exercising all day.
Had better	Advice	You'd better revise your lessons.

PRACTICE BANK

A. Hannah and Glenn are planning a party. Make sentences using the modal verb in brackets.

1. We/ tidy the flat before the party. (must)
2. Karen/ help us. (ought)
3. We/ decorate the flat. (have)
4. We/ (not) invite too many people. (should)
5. You/ bring food? (can)
6. Your mother/ lend us some money? (could)
7. We (not)/ make too much noise. (must)
8. The neighbours/ complain. (might)

B. Your brother has broken his wrist and he is going on a coach journey. He asks the other passengers to help him. What does he say? Use each of the expressions at least once: can you, will you, could you, would you... He asks someone to:

1. Carry his bags to the coach.
2. Hold the door.
3. Fasten his seat belt.
4. Open his bottle of water.
5. Help him put his coat on.
6. Close the window.

C. Underline the correct words.

1. I know you want to learn to dance. I **could/may** teach you.
2. Why don't we **eat/eating** in Bob's new restaurant?
3. **Could/would** I speak to Carl, please?
4. **Can/may** you drive me to school today?
5. **May/will** I carry that for you? It looks very heavy.
6. **Could/will** you give me your phone number, please?
7. I enjoyed playing tennis with you. **Should/would** we play again?
8. How about **inviting/invite** Katy too?
9. **Would/may** you help me with this exercise?
10. **Should/will** we meet at the party at 7?

D. Complete these sentences using the correct form of “must” or “have to”.
Think about the tense “have to”.

1. I _____ get up early because I had an important exam (have to).
2. You _____ always tell the truth. (must)
3. I _____ (buy) a new computer next year. (have to)
4. _____ (we) wash up now? (have to)
5. When he was in the school team, Josh _____ train every day. (have to)
6. Children _____ (not) go in the pool without an adult. (must)
7. I _____ (not) pay to use the club's gym because I 'am a member. (have to)
8. How long _____ (you) wait for the train last night? (have to)

E. For each sentence, underline “mustn’t” or “don’t have to.”

1. Tell Callum he **mustn’t/ doesn’t have to** drive me to the station because Dave can.
2. Students **mustn’t/ don’t have to** go out during classes.
3. You can stay at home, you **don’t have to/ mustn’t** come with us.
4. You **mustn’t/ don’t have to** tell Abby! It is our secret.
5. I **mustn’t/ don’t have to** forget to do homework tonight.
6. You **mustn’t/ don’t have to** bring any football boots because I can lend you.
7. You **mustn’t/ don’t have to** clean the house because it’s not dirty.
8. We **mustn’t/ don’t have to** be late because we don’t want to miss the beginning of the film.

F. You have a part-time job in a shop. Your friend is starting to work at the shop next week. Give your friend some advice. Use each expression in the box once.

you must... you ought to ... you could... you should...
you shouldn't... you mustn't...

1. Be polite to the customers

2. Offer to work extra hours

3. Arrive at work on time

4. Look tidy

5. Look bored

6. Lose the key

G. Fill in the gaps in this email with one of the words or phrases in the box.

had I'll have must should needn't didn't have shouldn't

Dear Georgia:

I (1) _____ tell you about my weekend with my friend Erin who lives in Leeds. The journey wasn't easy because I (2) _____ to change trains three times. But Erin lives near the station so I (3) _____ to take a taxi or the bus to her flat. We spent all weekend chatting and shopping. You (4) _____ come with me next time. You (5) _____ spend every weekend studying. I need to study hard this week. If I don't pass my maths exam, I (6) _____ to take it again. I want to visit Erin again next weekend. Why don't you come with me? You (7) _____ decide yet. You can tell me on Friday.