GRAMMAR PRACTICE

B Grammar

Modal verbs (*can, could, may, might, must, will, would, shall, should, ought to, need*) are auxiliary verbs that give information about ability, possibility or necessity.

Modal verbs are followed by the infinitive without *to* and their form doesn't change:
*He **could speak** French and Italian.* (**not** ~~*He coulds speak*~~)
***Could** you **speak** French before you lived there?* (**not** ~~*Did you could speak*~~)

1 Ability

We use the following verbs to talk about ability:

Present	*can, can't, be able to, manage to*	*I **can't** swim.*
Past	*could, couldn't, be able to, manage to*	*They **weren't able to** find out his name.*
Perfect	*be able to, manage to*	***Have** you **managed to** finish the report yet?*
Future	*be able to, manage to*	*I **won't be able to** meet you later.*

It is more common to use *can/could* to talk about general ability in the present and past than *be able to*:
***Can** you remember much about it?* (= Are you able to remember?)
*He **could** speak French and Italian, but he couldn't remember his name.*

To talk about ability on one specific occasion in the past we use *couldn't, was(n't)/were(n't) able to*, but not *could*:
*The police **were able to** find out that he could speak French and Italian.* (**not** ~~*The police could find out*~~)
*He **couldn't** remember who he was.*

We sometimes use *manage to* to show that something is difficult to achieve:
*I've finally **managed to** give up smoking after all these years!*

We use *be able to* or *manage to* with perfect or future forms:
*Apparently he's **been able to** find his family.*
*Within a year he'll probably **be able to** remember quite a lot.* (**not** ~~*Within a year he can probably remember quite a lot.*~~)

2 Other uses of *can*

We use *can* to mean *sometimes*:
*People **can do** funny things when they've experienced something terrible.* (= people sometimes do funny things)

We also use *can* to ask for and give permission:
***Can I** borrow the car this afternoon?*
***You can** borrow it, but I need it later this evening.*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3 Possibility

We use *must*, *may*, *might*, *could*, *couldn't* and *can't* when there is some evidence, information or belief that something is probably or possibly true (or not true). The modal verb we choose depends on the strength of the evidence we have to support our ideas.

very likely	*must*
possible	*might, may, could, may not, might not*
very unlikely	*can't, couldn't*

Could, *may* and *might* express the same degree of possibility:
*He **may/might/could** remember some things already.*

Couldn't expresses the same probability as *can't*. It is usually used to talk about the past:
*The police realised he **couldn't** be Canadian.* (= it was very unlikely that he was Canadian)

⚠ *May not* and *might not* do not express the same probability as *couldn't*:
*The supermarket **may/might not** be open today because it's a Bank Holiday.* (***not** ~~the supermarket couldn't be open~~*)

Present

We use *may (not)*, *might (not)*, *could(n't)*, *must*, *can't* + infinitive without *to* to talk about possibility in the present:
*He **may remember** some things already.* (= it is possible he remembers some things now)
*It **can't be** very easy living with someone who doesn't remember any of the past.* (= it is very unlikely that it is easy)

We use *may (not)*, *might (not)*, *could(n't)*, *must*, *can't* + *be* + *-ing* to talk about things (possibly) happening or in progress at the time of speaking:
*They **must be having** a difficult time adjusting to it all.*
*The phone is engaged. She **might be talking** to her sister on the phone.*

Past

We can use *may (not)*, *might (not)*, *could(n't)*, *must*, *can't* + *have* + past participle to talk about possibility in the past:
*In the attack he **must have hit** his head.* (= there is strong evidence that he hit his head)
*He **could have had** a wife and children.* (this is a possible situation)
*He **can't have been** married.* (= there is strong evidence that he wasn't married)

We can use *may (not)*, *might (not)*, *could(n't)*, *must*, *can't* + *have been* + *-ing* to talk about things possibly happening or in progress in the past:
*He **might have been trying** to run away from his past.*

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Future

We can use *may (not)*, *might (not)*, and *could (not)* + infinitive without *to* to talk about possibility or uncertainty in the future:
*He **could make** a total recovery one day.*

We can use *may (not)*, *might (not)*, *could (not)*, *must*, *can't* + *be* + *-ing* to talk about things possibly happening at a time in the future:
*I **might be meeting** John later.*

4 Expressing possibility and opinions in written texts

Modals are very important in written texts because they 'soften' the message and help to show that the author is expressing an opinion rather than a proven fact. *May* is very common in these kinds of texts as well as *can* used to mean 'sometimes'. (see B3)

Compare these sentences and the teacher's comments:

Student's work	Teacher's comment
People are unkind about their colleagues but it is simply because they are feeling insecure at work.	How do you know this?
People can be unkind about their colleagues but it may simply be because they are feeling insecure at work.	Good sentence.
Banning cars with high fuel consumption is a good idea, as it will result in less pollution.	This is a very strong opinion.
Banning cars with high fuel consumption may be a good idea, as it could result in a less pollution.	Good sentence. You are making your opinion 'softer'.

5 Alternatives to modals

Adverbs like *certainly*, *probably*, *possibly*, *perhaps* and *maybe* can be used to express similar ideas to modal verbs:
*He had **probably** been attacked and robbed.* (= he must have been attacked)

We can use *it* + *be* + *certain/likely/probable/possible/impossible* to express ability, probability and possibility:
***It is possible** to program your computer to translate texts automatically.* (= you can program your computer)
***It is possible** that the train will be late.* (= the train might be late)

LIVEWORKSHEETS

C Grammar exercises

1 **Underline the most suitable words. Sometimes both options are possible.**

1 He's a concert pianist and he *can / manages to* play all Beethoven's sonatas.
2 When I lived in a small town I *was able to / could* walk almost everywhere, but now I live in the capital city I need a car.
3 They worked all night and *could / managed to* finish the report just in time.
4 The protestors *didn't manage to / couldn't* persuade the president to change the law.
5 Next year she *can / will be able to* join the club, but she's not old enough yet.
6 In my country it *can / is able to* get very cold in the winter.
7 I was nearly late as the bus didn't come, but luckily I *could / managed to* get a taxi.
8 I hope that I *will be able to / will manage to* do some sightseeing when I'm in New York next week on business, but I've got a busy schedule.
9 She didn't get good enough grades to go to her first choice of university but she *could / was able to* get a place at another one.

2 **Tick (✓) the sentence, a or b, which best matches the sentence on the right.**

1a	He might be British.	He has a British passport.
b	He must be British. ✓	
2a	Our teacher can't be off sick.	I just saw him in the corridor talking to a student.
b	Our teacher may not be off sick.	
3a	It can be cold in Delhi in December.	I advise you to take some warm clothes just in case.
b	It must be cold in Delhi in December.	
4a	John can't have been working late last night.	He wasn't home when I called at seven.
b	John might have been working late last night.	
5a	He can't be a millionaire.	He has shares in the most successful company of all time.
b	He must be a millionaire.	
6a	I may come to the lecture this afternoon.	It depends if I finish my essay before then.
b	I must come to the lecture this afternoon.	
7a	The exam may have been very difficult.	Not many people passed it.
b	The exam must have been very difficult.	
8a	John couldn't know how to get here.	We will have to give him directions.
b	John might not know how to get here.	

LIVEWORKSHEETS

3 **Replace the underlined phrases with a suitable past modal phrase.**



The mummy of Djedmaatesankh, a young woman from the ninth century BC, lies behind a glass display in the Royal Ontario Museum. 2,800 years ago she lived in Thebes with her husband on the east bank of the river Nile. They were well-off, although as a double-income couple without children 1 ~~it is likely they were~~ rather unusual. Djedmaatesankh was a musician at the great Temple of Amun-Re at nearby Karnak, where her husband was a temple doorkeeper. 2 It is possible that their jobs at the temple provided the couple with a small wage and other benefits to supplement their main income from a piece of fertile Nile land on which 3 it is possible that they grew crops of barley, sesame, or dates.

We can only guess at what Djedmaatesankh's life would have been like, and try to imagine what her problems were. 4 It is possible she was anxious about her inability to have children and certainly, as she approached her thirties, 5 it is highly likely that she worried about her health.

Looking upon a face from so long ago, a face not unlike that of any other young woman in Egypt today, ties us more personally to history. In a way that 6 was impossible for her to imagine, Djedmaatesankh has achieved a degree of fame in our 21st century, appearing in dozens of newspapers and magazines.

1 they must have been
2 .....
3 .....
4 .....
5 .....
6 .....

4 **Read the following essay. Find seven places where you can add *may*, *can* or *can't* to soften the verbs.**

'Children can be adversely affected by the influence of television.'
To what extent do you agree with this statement? Give reasons for your answer.

Almost every family has a television these days, and many children watch a whole range of programmes every day. Some people believe that television is harmful to children, saying that it influences behaviour in a negative way. can be

There are a lot of programmes on television that are not educational and that contain violence and bad language. However, watching violence on television encourages violent behaviour in children. This is true in cases of children who have already exhibited violent tendencies, but it isn't true of all children, otherwise we would have an epidemic of child crime. It is also argued that bad language on television encourages the same in children.

Nevertheless, overall I believe that restricting children's television viewing to mainly educational programmes shown at a time of day when there is no violence or bad language will overcome any risks of television being a bad influence.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

D Test practice

Listening Section 4

Questions 1–10

Complete the summary below.

Write ***NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS*** *for each answer.*

The history of soap

In ancient times soap was used to clean **1** ..... . Soap was not seen as a means of personal hygiene until **2** ..... times. Ancient people had little technology but many **3** ..... so were probably able to discover soap by chance. Soap was probably only used in **4** ..... societies. There is no evidence that tribespeople at the time of the British **5** ..... used soap.

The history of soap has mostly been discovered from **6** ..... . The earliest known use of soap in 2500 BC was to wash **7** ..... . The Egyptians made soap by mixing salts with oil taken from **8** ..... . The Romans saw washing themselves as a social activity. They removed dirt using steam and a **9** ..... . When Pompeii was excavated, they discovered a **10** ..... for making soap.

Grammar focus task

Listen to the first part of the recording again and fill in the gaps with a modal and the verb in brackets in the correct form.

1 While you ..... (*find*) some information on the origins of soap, it is not a substance which has excited a great deal of study so far.

2 We can only assume that other activities ..... (*provide*) the basis from which this key concept arose.

3 So, how is it that these primitive people from over two thousand years ago ..... (*discover*) soap?

4 I carried out some experiments using basic techniques to try to find out what people without any chemical knowledge ..... (*observe*).

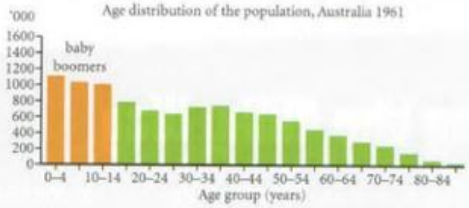
5 I was able to demonstrate that they would indeed ..... (*make*) a soap that is not dissimilar to the one we know today.

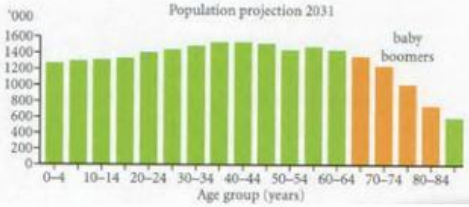
Decide whether the modals are used to show ability or possibility in these sentences.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

READING & SPEAKING PRACTICE

1 What do the charts suggest about the future demography of Australia? What implications does this have for Australian society?





Reading

2 Read this article quickly, to confirm your ideas.

about 625 words

THE LEGACY OF THE BABY BOOM IN AUSTRALIA

The period from the end of the Second World War in 1945 until around the mid-1960s has come to be known as the *baby boom* in Australia and in several other countries such as New Zealand, Canada and the USA. After the war, these were all relatively prosperous, industrially advanced countries with rapidly expanding economies, enhanced living standards and serious labour shortages. In 1961, the total fertility rate in Australia peaked at 3.6 babies per woman. Twenty years later, it had fallen to half that level and has continued to decline, though at a much slower rate.

Based on assumptions of continued low fertility, combined with the fact that people are generally living longer with each generation, Australia's population is projected to continue ageing. Between 2011 and 2031, baby boomers will make a significant contribution to the number of people aged 65 years and over. During this period, the population aged 65 and over is projected to grow from 3 to 5 million. By 2031, all surviving baby boomers will be between 65 and 84 years of age. In the years immediately beyond this, baby boomers are projected to swell the population aged 85 and over from 612,000 to 1.1 million.

Structural ageing has many implications for society. In 2031, if not before, 27% of all Australians of voting age (18 years and over) will be aged 65 or older. This has implications both for the level of social expenditure that might be required in future and the level of resources that might be available to fund it. For example, as the population aged 65 and over increases in size, associated social expenditure on income support and health services can be expected to increase. However, since the potential labour force is projected to expand at a slower rate from 2011, it may be more difficult to generate the level of resources and public support needed to maintain a large aged population with an acceptable standard of living and quality of life.

In addition to changing demographics, there are many other factors, both social and economic, which could also have an important bearing on future levels of social expenditure and how it is distributed. Future rates of economic growth, productivity improvements and taxation levels will affect the level of resources potentially available. At the same time, the circumstances of future older generations, such as labour force participation, level of private income and asset holdings, health status, and availability of family and community support networks, will influence the extent to which resources will be needed for care of the elderly, health, housing and income support.

On the other hand, future trends in education, labour force participation, unemployment rates and income distribution among the younger age groups will influence the level and nature of competing demands such as university spending, employment programmes, unemployment benefits and support for low-income families.

Changes in social values, attitudes and government policy will also have an impact on the level of support provided for older people, as well as shaping the respective roles of government, private business, community groups, families and individuals in providing it. While much of the current research and policy on ageing tends to focus on the potential 'burden' to society of a large older population, the likely economic stimulus created by a growing market for home help, specialised housing, and financial advice has been largely overlooked. Better educated and more affluent than their parents' generation, baby boomers are currently an influential market sector and could remain so well into their retirement years. In addition, as the population ages, it is to be expected that public debate and government policy on ageing will be increasingly influenced by the views of older people.

LIVEWORKSHEETS



3 Now read the article again and carry out the tasks below.

Questions 1–5

Classify the following information as referring to

A 1961
B 2011
C 2031

*Write the correct letter, **A**, **B** or **C**.*

1 more than a quarter of the Australian electorate over 65
2 highest recorded number of births per female
3 3 million aged 65 or older
4 the elderly (85+) exceed 1 million soon after this
5 less growth in the numbers seeking employment

Questions 6–10

Complete the sentences below with words taken from the passage.
*Use **NO MORE THAN TWO WORDS** for each answer.*

6 The declining proportion of younger age groups in society and consequent increase in older age groups is known as ..... .
7 There are likely to be higher levels of public spending on ..... and medical care.
8 Future developments affecting the young are expected to have an effect on ..... for resources.
9 Researchers and policy makers have tended to see a larger older population as a ..... .
10 One aspect that has been forgotten is the ..... to the economy caused by an increased demand for care and other services.

Vocabulary Adjective–noun collocations

4 Check your understanding of these nouns and noun phrases from the reading passage.

1 *living standards* (line 7)
2 *labour shortages* (lines 7–8)
3 *social expenditure* (line 31)
4 *standard of living* (line 36)
5 *roles* (line 59)
6 *market sector* (line 68)

5 In the reading passage, underline the adjective that comes before each noun or noun phrase above.

6 Where possible, choose an adjective from the box that has a similar meaning to each adjective you have underlined.

acute	corresponding	crucial	declining
frivolous	inadequate	ineffectual	negligible
powerful	related	~~rising~~	satisfactory
thriving	unconnected		

EXAMPLE: *enhanced* (living standards) – *rising*

7 Which of the remaining adjectives in the box mean the *opposite* of the underlined adjectives in the passage? One underlined adjective doesn't have an opposite. Some adjectives aren't needed.

EXAMPLE: *enhanced – declining*

Speaking *Part 3*

8 You are going to hear a strong IELTS candidate being asked the questions below by an examiner. Before you listen, discuss each question with a partner.

- Can you explain why the birth rate is falling in many countries?
- What impact does an ageing population have on society?
- Should the state provide completely free care for the elderly?
- In the future, will working people have to retire at a later age than they currently do?
- What can young people learn from their grandparents and great-grandparents?
- Why are people generally living longer nowadays, in your opinion?

9 🎧 As you listen, notice how the candidate uses the language below.

I'm not an expert, but ...	Yes, in theory ... but in practice ...
I read somewhere that ...	I suppose so.
That's a real possibility.	Speaking personally ...
It has many implications.	That's crucial.
There's a question mark over ...	

LIVEWORKSHEETS