

Modals overview

Modal	Example	Uses
Can	<p>She can ride a horse. We can't fix it. Can I smoke here? Can you help me?</p>	<p>Ability / Possibility Inability / Impossibility Asking for permission Request</p>
Could	<p>Could I borrow your dictionary? Could you say it again more slowly? We could try to fix it ourselves. I think we could have another Gulf War. He gave up his old job so he could work for us.</p>	<p>Asking for permission. Request Suggestion Future possibility Ability in the past</p>
May	<p>May I have another cup of coffee? China may become a major economic power.</p>	<p>Asking for permission Future possibility</p>
Might	<p>We'll phone later, they might be eating their dinner now. They might give us a 10% discount. He might have tried to call while I was out.</p>	<p>Present possibility Future (small) possibility Possible action in the past</p>
Must	<p>We must say good-bye now. You mustn't park here.</p>	<p>Necessity / Obligation Prohibition</p>
Have to	<p>I have to be home by ten. She has to wear a uniform at work.</p>	<p>Strong obligation, rule (comes from someone else)</p>
Don't have to	<p>I don't have to get up early at weekend. (I can stay in bed as long as I want.)</p>	<p>Any obligation at all, no need to do it</p>
Shall	<p>Shall I help you with your luggage? Shall we say 2.30 then? Shall I do that or will you?</p>	<p>Offer Suggestion Asking what to do</p>
Should Shouldn't	<p>We should sort out this problem at once. You look tired. I think you should take a few days off. I think we should check everything again. Profits should increase next year. I shouldn't have spoken to him like that. I should have apologized earlier.</p>	<p>Saying what's right or correct Giving advice Recommending action Uncertain prediction Regret not doing something in the past</p>
Will	<p>I can't see any taxis so I'll walk. I'll do that for you if you like. I'll get back to you first thing on Monday. Profits will increase next year.</p>	<p>Instant decisions Offer Promise Certain prediction</p>
Would	<p>Would you mind if I brought a colleague with me? Would you pass the salt please? Would you mind waiting a moment? "Would three o'clock suit you?" - "That'd be fine." Would you like to play golf this Friday? "Would you prefer tea or coffee?" - "I'd like tea please."</p>	<p>Asking for permission Request Request Making arrangements Invitation Preferences</p>