

Continue



























A modal verb (also called a modal auxiliary verb) is used along with a main verb to express possibility, ability, permission, or necessity. For example, in the statement ‘you must leave’, ‘must’ is a modal verb indicating that it’s necessary for the subject (‘you’) to perform the action of the verb (‘leave’). The modal verb ‘will’ is used to form the future tense, indicating an action that has not yet occurred (e.g., ‘I will clean the garage’). Examples: Modal verbs in a sentenceWe should listen to some music. Can you drive me to the airport? Amanda might practise her German. Be assured that you’ll submit flawless writing. Upload your document to correct all your mistakes. How are modal verbs used in sentences? Modal verbs are used along with a main verb to indicate ability, necessity, possibility, and permission. In sentences containing modal verbs, the main verb typically takes the infinitive form. Modal verbs come before main verbs and never change form. Examples: How to use modal verbsI might walk to work today. You may have as many cookies as you’d like. Lina must order tickets in advance if she wants to go to the theatre. The academic proofreading tool has been trained on 1000s of academic texts and by native English editors. Making it the most accurate and reliable proofreading tool for students. Upload my document Modal verbs list Below is a table that illustrates some of the various uses of modal verbs. Note that modal verbs are very commonly used in a wide variety of senses – this table doesn’t cover every possible usage. Modal verb Function Example Can Indicate ability Indicate possibility Indicate permission (informal) Make a request (informal) Javi can play the guitar. We can drive or walk. You can borrow that book. Can I have some water? Could Past form of ‘can’ Indicate possibility Make a polite request She could speak French. You could become a chef. Could you tell me the time? May Indicate possibility Indicate permission (formal) Make a request (formal) Dana may arrive late. You may enter. May I respond? Might Indicate possibility I might order pizza. Must Indicate obligation Indicate likelihood Cyclists must wear helmets. You must be very proud. Shall Indicate a future action (normally used only with ‘I’ and ‘we’) Ask a question (normally used only with ‘I’ and ‘we’) I shall attend. Shall we arrange a meeting? Should Make a suggestion Indicate likelihood You should watch that film. Tom should be at the office. Will Indicate a future action or event Make a polite request Fay will book the venue. Will you get the door? Would Past form of ‘will’ Make a polite request She would often work late. Would you call back later? Modal verbs are classed as a type of auxiliary verb. Auxiliary verbs are used along with a main verb to express tense, mood, or voice. However, unlike modal verbs, regular auxiliary verbs follow subject-verb agreement and must be conjugated for tense and mood. Examples: Auxiliary verbs in a sentenceMary was building a sandcastle. Gordon has burned the toast. Do you know what time it is? Modal verbs can be used along with auxiliary verbs to refer to possible past, continuous, or future action. When a modal verb is followed by another auxiliary verb (e.g., ‘have’, ‘be’), the main verb takes either the past participle form (typically ending in ‘-ed’, ‘-n’, or ‘-t’) or the present participle form (ending in ‘-ing’). The modal verb ‘will’ is used in all aspects of the future tense (e.g., ‘I will talk’, ‘you will be travelling’). Examples: Modal and auxiliary verbs combinedHe should have asked me first. You may be wondering what I mean. Farrah will have finished work by then. Modal verbs and mood The grammatical mood of a verb indicates the intention of the sentence. Modal verbs and auxiliary verbs are used along with a main verb to express mood. Grammatical mood Function Example Indicative State a fact ‘Lana is drinking coffee’. Imperative Express a command or a request (often with a negative auxiliary verb) ‘Don’t forget to call’. Interrogative Ask a question ‘Would you open the window?’ Conditional Express a condition ‘You should leave now if you want to get the bus’. Subjunctive Express a wish, doubt, or hypothetical situation ‘If you were free, we could watch a movie’. The academic proofreading tool has been trained on 1000s of academic texts and by native English editors. Making it the most accurate and reliable proofreading tool for students. Upload my document Other uses of modal verbs Modal verbs have various other functions in English. They can also be used: In indirect speech In negative statements For emphasis Indirect speech Modal verbs are used in indirect speech to indicate what someone else said. While most modal verbs stay the same when used in indirect speech, the past form of some modal verbs is used instead (e.g., ‘can’ becomes ‘could’). Examples: Modal verbs and reported speechDarren said ‘I will visit on Saturday’. Darren said he would visit on Saturday. Pria said ‘we should go to France’. Pria said we should go to France. Negative statements In negative statements containing modal verbs, the adverb ‘not’ comes immediately after the modal verb and before all other verbs. The negative form is often contracted (e.g., ‘would not’ becomes ‘wouldn’t’). Examples: How to use modal verbsTera can’t focus because her brother is playing the drums. You mustn’t play football inside the house anymore. Emphasis In everyday conversation, people sometimes place emphasis on a modal verb to refute a previous statement or question. The emphasised word is often italicised when written down. Examples: Modal verbs emphasising a statementWhy can’t you be nice? I can be nice! You won’t finish the project on time. I will finish it on time! Other interesting language articles If you want to know more about commonly confused words, definitions, common mistakes, and differences between US and UK spellings, make sure to check out some of our other language articles with explanations, examples, and quizzes. Frequently asked questions Is it “would of” or “would have”? “Would” is a modal verb that’s often used along with the auxiliary verb “have” to indicate that something was possible in the past but no longer is (e.g., “She would have been a professional athlete if she hadn’t broken her leg”). It can be contracted to “would’ve.” People sometimes mistakenly write “would of” because of its similar pronunciation. However, “would of” is never correct. What does “may” mean? “May” is a modal verb used to indicate possibility (e.g., “I may miss the bus”), make a request (e.g., “May I have a drink?”), or indicate permission (e.g., “You may sit down”). We strongly encourage students to use sources in their work. You can cite our article (APA Style) or take a deep dive into the articles below. This Scribbr article Ryan, E. (2023, December 06). What Is a Modal Verb? | Definition & Examples. Scribbr. Retrieved 26 May 2025, from Sources Aarts, B. (2011). Oxford modern English grammar. Oxford University Press. Butterfield, J. (Ed.). (2015). Fowler’s dictionary of modern English usage (4th ed.). Oxford University Press. Show all sources (3) Garner, B. A. (2016). Garner’s modern English usage (4th ed.). Oxford University Press. Modal verbs are a type of auxiliary verb. They show ability, possibility, obligation, and permission. Examples of modal verbs are can, could, may, must, should, and would. When you use this type of verb, the verb that follows it must be in its base form. Do not conjugate the verb after a modal verb into a specific form. Example 1: Correct: She can draw a horse. Incorrect: She can draws a horse. Example 2: Correct: They might go to the movies. Incorrect: They might to go to the movies.Auxiliary verbs are verbs that can change the tense, modality, voice, or other features of an action verb. You might have learned that auxiliary verbs are called “helping verbs.” Modal verbs are a specific type of auxiliary verb. They are used to denote permission, obligation, ability, or possibility. Modal verbs never change their form depending on the mood or tense. They do not have an infinitive, a past participle, or a present participle. Here are the most common modal verbs: can may must could should would The verbs that follow modal verbs should only be in their base form. They should never be conjugated into another form, including the infinitive. If the phrase be able to is used after a modal verb or as a modal verb phrase, the base form of the verb should follow to. It looks like an infinitive, but to is part of the modal verb phrase. Example with can: Correct: We can eat leftovers for dinner. Incorrect: We can to eat leftovers for dinner. Example with may: Correct: I may apply for a new job this year. Incorrect: I may applying for a new job this year. Example with must: Correct: He must call in if he’s going to miss work. Incorrect: He must calls in if he’s going to miss work. Example with could: Correct: By the time she was a year old, she could walk. Incorrect: By the time she was a year old, she could walked. Example with should: Correct: I should leave for work now. Incorrect: I should to leave for work now. Example with would: Correct: She would never lie to me! Incorrect: She would never lies to me! Example with be able to: Correct: She was able to help me with my homework. Incorrect: She was able to helped me with my homework. Index of contents Video: modal verbs Are key word transformations and modal verbs giving you a lot of headache?In this editable PDF file you will find an outline of the key points to bear in mind when transforming a sentence that has modal verbs as a tested element. There is also a checklist of all language areas you need to review in order to get a perfect score on Part 4 of Use of English with short examples. Last but not least, you get 10 key word transformation examples to test yourself.Find more worksheets here. 67%(3)67% found this document useful (3 votes)3K viewsThe document provides examples of modal verb transformations for an English proficiency exam. It contains 7 sentences that must be rewritten without changing the meaning using modal verbs li...AI-enhanced title and descriptionSaveSave MODAL VERBS – KEY WORD TRANSFORMATIONS FOR FCE.pdf For Later67%67% found this document useful, undefined Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. 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It contains 44 sentences that are transformed by changing the modal verb ...AI-enhanced title and descriptionSaveSave Modal verbs transformations.pdf For Later100%100% found this document useful, undefined Writing Argumentative Essays Articles Letters and Emails More Links English News Articles Privacy Policy Our academic editing and proofreading services Your dissertation can be carefully and sensitively proofread by one of our talented, professional editors, ensuring that your written English is clear, fluent and precise. A piece of work that you can take immense pride in. Dissertation Proofreading Writing your PhD thesis invariably takes great time and effort. By using our thesis proofreading service you can be sure that all your endeavours to build an original, persuasive argument will be fully recognized and appreciated. Thesis Proofreading Essay writing can be a major challenge, requiring language that is concise, vigorous and engaging. 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By using our proofreading service all mistakes will be corrected via Track Changes in Microsoft Word. Our editors will also provide friendly, helpful feedback on how to improve your writing. Scribbr specializes in proofreading academic documents. All our editors have themselves written a dissertation or thesis and have first-hand experience of all the struggles that this entails. Why not allow these willing specialists to help to improve your own writing? Scribbr has many satisfied customers and has already proofread over 10,000 documents. We would love to help you improve your document too. Scribbr is an academic proofreading service founded in 2012. The company has grown to include over 400 editors, and is now one of the largest academic proofreading companies. We deliver premium quality work at a fair and competitive price. Both students and academics value our quality and our prompt service, rating our service at 4.5. 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