

# 50 Modal verbs overview

Modal verbs are used to talk about likelihood, ability, permission, and obligation, among other things. They often refer to hypothetical situations.

⚙️ **New language** Using modal verbs

Aa **Vocabulary** Modal verbs

🧩 **New skill** Asking, offering, and predicting

## 50.1 KEY LANGUAGE MODAL VERBS

Modal verbs share certain characteristics. They don't change form depending on the subject, they are always followed by an infinitive, and their question and negative forms are made without "do."

### Logical deductions

It **can't** be Jane because she's on vacation.  
It **could** / **might** / **may** be Dave. I don't know.  
It **should** be my dad. He said he'd call me.  
It **must** be Tom, since nobody else ever calls.



### Obligation

You **must** arrive on time for work.



### Permission

You **can** have more cake if you want.  
You **may** take as much as you like.



### Ability

I **can** speak three languages.  
I **can't** read Latin because it's too difficult.  
I **couldn't** study it when I was at school.



### Requests

**Can** / **Could** you give me a ride home later?  
**Would** you email James for me, please?  
**Will** you lock up the office tonight?



### Advice and suggestions

You **should** / **ought to** go to the doctor.  
You **could** try the new medicine.



### Offers

**Can** I help you with those?  
**Shall** I carry some of your bags?





## 50.2 FILL IN THE GAPS USING THE MODAL VERBS IN THE PANEL

The rules say that you must finish before 5pm.

- ① I appreciate that it's difficult, but I think you \_\_\_\_\_ talk to him about it.
- ② Finally, after months of studying, I \_\_\_\_\_ read music.
- ③ I'm sorry, but I'm terribly busy at the moment, Mr. Jones. \_\_\_\_\_ tomorrow be okay?
- ④ I followed the recipe, so it \_\_\_\_\_ to taste great, but sometimes it doesn't.
- ⑤ I've tried really hard, but I just \_\_\_\_\_ make these figures add up.
- ⑥ I'm feeling very unwell. \_\_\_\_\_ I be excused?

can't

can

~~must~~

should

May

Would







ought



## 50.3 CROSS OUT THE INCORRECT WORDS IN EACH SENTENCE



Before you drive a car on your own, you ~~will~~ / ~~could~~ / **must** pass a test.

- ①  It's very hot in here. **Would** / **Should** / **Shall** you open a window, please?
- ②  This coffee has sugar in it! It **will** / **must** / **ought to** be yours.
- ③  I don't know when the movie will finish. It **can** / **shall** / **might** not be until after 10pm.
- ④  **Shall** / **Would** / **Will** I help you carry those dishes to the kitchen?
- ⑤  My lawnmower has broken. **Could** / **Should** / **Would** I borrow yours, please?
- ⑥  I **can't** / **should** / **ought to** swim very well at all, but my sister is an excellent swimmer.





## 50.4 REWRITE THE SENTENCES, CORRECTING THE ERRORS

You should have took your shoes off when you enter the building.

*You should have taken your shoes off when you entered the building.*

1 She was was the lead singer in the band because she did could sing very well.

2 Do you would pick me up from work this evening, please?

3 The tree looks like it may to fall down soon.

4 If she doesn't study hard enough, she doesn't might get into medical school.



## 50.5 READ THE TEXT AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

Little cultural differences often shock students the most.

True ☒ False ☐

1 Some students are surprised that British houses have shutters.

True ☐ False ☐

2 Some students think British people eat a lot of potatoes.

True ☐ False ☐

3 One student said that he ate mashed potatoes every night with his host family.

True ☐ False ☐

4 In the UK, most animals must stay outside at night.

True ☐ False ☐

### LIFESTYLE

## Student surprises!

What surprises exchange students when they stay with British families?



**M**ore often than not, it's the small cultural differences that shock students the most when they stay with British families. Some students, for example, are surprised that houses have curtains, rather than shutters. Other students say they are shocked by the amount of potatoes that British people eat. One student once said to me, "Tonight, it could be mashed, it might be fried or it may even be boiled but, whatever it is, it will be potatoes!"

The British love of pets can also surprise students, and the fact that pets can sleep inside the house or even in bedrooms can be shocking for some. In many cultures, animals must stay outside.



## 50.6 LISTEN TO THE AUDIO AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS



Simon is telling his friend about his recent trip to the United States.

What does Simon say about the internal flights?

- They cost too much ☐  
 They were easy to book ☐  
 They were fairly cheap ☒

1 What type of accommodation did Simon stay in?

- Hotels ☐  
 B&Bs ☐  
 Family homes ☐

2 According to Simon, what should you **not** do with chopsticks?

- Leave them standing in rice ☐  
 Eat rice with them ☐  
 Use the same pair more than once ☐

3 What did Simon think about spending time with a Native-American family?

- It was really interesting ☐  
 It was fairly interesting ☐  
 It was really boring ☐

### 50 CHECKLIST



Using modal verbs ☐



Modal verbs ☐



Asking, offering, and predicting ☐



## REVIEW THE ENGLISH YOU HAVE LEARNED IN UNITS 47–50

NEW LANGUAGE	SAMPLE SENTENCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	UNIT
DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES	I'm writing about people <b>who</b> are in prison. This is the car <b>which</b> the criminal stole.	<input type="checkbox"/>	47.1
NON-DEFINING RELATIVE CLAUSES	We spoke to Linda, <b>who had been mugged</b> . Her necklace, <b>which she'd just bought</b> , was stolen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	47.6
"WHERE," "WHEN," "WHEREBY"	That is the place <b>where</b> the judge sits.	<input type="checkbox"/>	48.1
"WHOSE"	This is the lawyer <b>whose</b> client lied in court.	<input type="checkbox"/>	48.5
"CAN" IN THE FUTURE	If I work harder, I <b>will be able to</b> play at concerts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	49.1
"MUST" AND "HAVE TO" IN THE FUTURE	In the future, I think everyone <b>will have to</b> recycle.	<input type="checkbox"/>	49.3
MODAL VERBS	You <b>must</b> arrive on time for work. You <b>should</b> go to the doctor if you feel sick.	<input type="checkbox"/>	50.1