



Modal verbs

- We use them to express *permission, ability, obligation, advice, criticism*
- they have only one form (*exception → *have to* changes its form depending on person and tense, ex. *She **has to** go home.*)
- Modals are never followed by the full infinitive (=to do, to play, etc.) ex. *She **could play** the guitar when she was three.*

Modal verbs - ability



CAN

- To talk about ability now or generally

*The doctor **can** see you now.*

*Terry **can** speak Arabic.*

- to talk about decisions made now about future ability

*We **can** go to the concert tomorrow, if you like.*

Modal verbs - ability

BE ABLE TO

- To talk about future ability

*You **will be able to** take your driving test after a few more lessons.*

Modal verbs - ability

COULD

- To talk about ability in the past

*Tammy **could** read when she was two years old.*

- To talk about present, future or general hypothetical situations

*I wish I **could** go with you tomorrow.*

Modal verbs - ability

COULD + HAVE+ PAST PARTICIPLE

- To talk about past hypothetical situations

***I could have bought** a more expensive shirt, but I didn't want to.*

Modal verbs - permission

CAN, COULD, MAY

- To ask for and give permission now, for the future, or generally.

May I go on the school trip next week?

- May → very polite
- Could → polite
- Can → less polite

Modal verbs- permission (past)

- To talk about *past permission*, we do not usually use a modal

✓ *I **was allowed** to go on the school trip.*

*x I **could** go on the school trip.*

*exception → Reported Speech

*My parents said I **could** go on the school trip.*

Modal verbs - advice

SHOULD, OUGHT TO

- To ask for and give advice now, for the future, or generally.

*You **should / ought to** eat less fast-food.*

Modal verbs - criticism

SHOULD / OUGHT TO + HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

- To make criticisms about past behaviour

*You **should / ought to have studied** harder for the test.*



Modal verbs - obligation

MUST

To talk about personal obligation now, in the future, or generally

*I **must** remember to get Dad a birthday present.*

*unusual to use *must*
for questions. We usually
use *have to*.

*Do I **have to** be home
by midnight?*



Modal verbs - obligation

HAVE TO

To talk about external obligation now, in the future, or generally

*I **have to** study for a test tonight.*

*I **will have to** be more careful in future.*

Modal verbs – obligation (past)

HAD TO

To talk about personal or external obligation
in the past

*I **had to** tidy my bedroom last night.*

Mustn't vs. Have to

You **mustn't** eat that! =
Don't eat that!

(You are not allowed to
eat that!)

- You **don't have to** eat that. = You can eat it if you want to but it isn't necessary.

