



Modals

Can, will, must, may, should, could, would, might

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Modals are helping verbs that tell you more about the mood or attitude of the action verb.

## Can

|                               |                                                              |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABILITY or ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY | We can guarantee a sale.                                     |
| OPPORTUNITY                   | We can stay in the hotel where the conference is being held. |
| PERMISSION                    | My teenage daughter can stay out until midnight on Saturday. |
| REQUEST                       | Can you please review the document before I send it out?     |
| POSSIBILITY                   | Any hard working employee can be promoted to CEO.            |

## Will

|                                             |                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PROMISE OR ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY IN THE FUTURE | The value of the building will be subject to change in the future. |
| PROMISE or ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY IN THE FUTURE | We will guarantee a successful sale when the conditions are met.   |
| VOLUNTARY ACTION IN THE FUTURE              | I will send the certificate today.                                 |
| PREDICTION ABOUT THE FUTURE                 | We think Joe Bloggs will get the promotion he is after.            |

## Must (and must not)

|                                 |                                                                         |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY or NECESSITY | To complete the work, you must follow three important steps.            |
| PROHIBITION                     | Bob, you must not be late for the meeting, or we will lose the account. |

## May

|                                             |                                                                                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| POSSIBLY WILL or ONLY A DEGREE OF CERTAINTY | The lack of liquidity in the capital markets means that it may be difficult to achieve a successful sale of these assets in the short term. |
| GIVE PERMISSION                             | You may go to the party if your dad can drop you off.                                                                                       |
| REQUEST PERMISSION                          | May I use your stapler?                                                                                                                     |

## Should

|                     |                                                                                                                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MAKE RECOMMENDATION | If you visit Sydney, you should book to see an opera at the Opera House.                                                 |
| ADVICE              | This document should not be reproduced without written permission.                                                       |
| EXPECTATION         | The proposed development is to be constructed with new building materials and therefore should not contain any asbestos. |
| OBLIGATION          | Joan should be in the office by 7.00 am tomorrow to prepare the meeting room.                                            |

## Could

|                                           |                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| POSSIBILITY or ONLY A DEGREE OF CERTAINTY | We are not aware of issues which could materially affect the value of the property.          |
| POLITE REQUEST                            | Could you send the agenda items to me by 4.00 pm today.                                      |
| CONDITIONAL FORM OF CAN                   | We could go to Canberra for the weekend if I didn't have to hand in an assignment on Monday. |
| PAST ABILITY                              | Rob could type 90 words a minute after leaving college.                                      |

## Would

|                      |                                                                   |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|
| CONDITIONAL SENTENCE | If he had completed his MBA, he would already have been promoted. |
| PAST FORM OF WILL    | I knew that she would be successful in her career.                |

## Might

Generally speaking, *might* is less likely than *may*.

|             |                                                            |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| POSSIBILITY | Your proposal might be accepted under specific conditions. |
|-------------|------------------------------------------------------------|

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