



Modals

What is a modal?

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

Can
Will
Must
May
Should
Could
Would
Might

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

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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 noon 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 noon today.

CONDITIONAL FORM OF CAN

We could go to San Diego 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.

DETAILS

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