



What are Modal Verbs?

Modal verbs are special verbs which behave very differently from normal verbs. Here are some important differences:

1. Modal verbs do not take "-s" in the third person.

- *He can speak Chinese.*
- *She should be here by 9:00.*

2. You use "not" to make modal verbs negative, even in Simple Present and Simple Past.

- *He should not be late.*
- *They might not come to the party.*

3. Many modal verbs cannot be used in the past tenses or the future tenses.

- He will can go with us. **Not Correct**
- She musted study very hard. **Not Correct**

Common Modal Verbs

Can	Ought to
Could	Shall
May	Should
Might	Will
Must	Would

Permission, Prohibition, Obligation, No obligation

To express **permission**, **prohibition**, **obligation** and no **obligation** we usually use modal verbs.

Permission

Can is often used to ask for and give permission.

- *Can I sit here?*
- *You can use my car if you like.*
- *Can I make a suggestion?*

We can also use **may**, **be allowed to** and **could** to ask for and give permission but **can** is used more often.



Prohibition

Both **can't** and **mustn't** are used to show that something is prohibited – it is **not allowed**.

- *You can't park here, sir.*
- *You can wear jeans but you can't wear trainers in that bar.*
- *You mustn't speak when the teacher is speaking.*

Can't tells us that something is against the rules. **Mustn't** is usually used when the obligation comes from the person who is speaking.

Obligation

Have to and **must** are both used to express obligation. There is a slight difference between the way they are used.

Have to shows us that the obligation comes from somebody else. It's a law or a rule and the speaker can't change it.

- *Do you have to wear a uniform at your school?*
- *John can't come because he has to work tomorrow.*
- *In Britain you have to buy a TV licence every year.*

Must shows us that the obligation comes from the speaker. It isn't a law or a rule.

- *I must call my dad tonight.*
- *You must hand in your homework on Tuesday or your mark will be zero.*
- *You must come and visit us the next time you come to London.*

No obligation

We use **don't have to** to show that there is no obligation. You can do something if you want to but it's not compulsory.

- *You don't have to wear a tie in our office. You can wear a tie if you want to but it's OK if you don't.*
- *It'll be nice if you do but you don't have to come with me if you don't want to.*
- *You don't have to dress up for the party. Wear whatever you feel comfortable in.*

NEED

Need can behave either as a **modal verb** or as a main **verb**: As a **modal verb**, **need** is most typically used in negative sentences or in affirmative sentences with a negative meaning. It expresses absence of obligation or necessity, and it is followed by a bare infinitive: You needn't worry about that.