

MODAL VERBS

Modal Verb	Use: to express...	Structure	Example
MUST / HAVE TO ¹	OBLIGATION	+ BASE FORM	She must lose weight. Her heart is playing up. You have to follow the rules, Tommy!
CAN / COULD	ABILITY ²		He can ski but he can't play tennis. She could run very fast when she was young.
CAN / COULD / MAY	PERMISSION		Mum! Can I go out with my friends tonight? Teacher, could / may ³ I open the window, please?
MAY / MIGHT / COULD	PROBABILITY		He may/might be here soon so hurry up! They could be sisters. They look very alike.
SHOULD / OUGHT TO	ADVICE		You should see a doctor if your arm is still painful . Why dwell on it? You ought to let it go.

¹ **MUST** expresses an obligation felt by the speaker or self-imposed.

*I **must tidy** my room: it's a terrible mess.*

HAVE TO expresses an obligation imposed by an external circumstance or law. *You **have to wear** a uniform in this school.*

² **BE ABLE TO** is used as an **alternative** to **CAN/COULD** to express ability in specific occasions *I **was able to** win the race.*

³ **MAY** can be used only with "I" & "we" to ask for permission. It is more formal than "can". ***May I come** in?*

REMEMBER!!!  **MUSTN'T** expresses **PROHIBITION**

*You **mustn't touch** that wire! It's dangerous!*

 **DON'T HAVE TO** expresses **NO NECESSITY**

*You **don't have to come** if you don't want to.*


It can be substituted by **NEEDN'T**

*You **needn't come** if you don't want to.*

MODAL VERBS OF DEDUCTION

Modal Verb	Use: to express...	Structure	Example
MUST	90 – 100% sure SOMETHING is TRUE	Present: + BASE FORM Past: + HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE	<i>She's very pale. She must be ill.</i>
			<i>He didn't answer so he must have been busy.</i>
CAN'T	90 – 100% sure SOMETHING is NOT TRUE		<i>He can't be their father. He's too young.</i>
			<i>You can't have¹ met him. He was away.</i>
MAY/MIGHT (or COULD)	30 – 50% sure SOMETHING is or isn't TRUE		<i>Tim may/might be already at school.</i>
			<i>We called but you may not have heard us.</i>
SHOULD / OUGHT TO	SOMETHING is EXPECTED TO BE TRUE		<i>They left early so they should be home by now.</i>
			<i>Still here? You should have finished hours ago.</i>

¹ **COULDN'T HAVE** is an alternative to **CAN'T HAVE** *He **couldn't have done** it: he wasn't even here when it happened.*

REMEMBER!!!  **MUSTN'T** is **NOT** used to express **DEDUCTION**: **CAN'T** is used in its place!

 **CAN** is **NOT** used to express **DEDUCTION**: **MAY / MIGHT** are used in its place!