

# The Modal Verbs



- Ability – to be able to, can
- Possibility - can, could, may, might
- Permission – can, may
- Request – can/could, will/would, may/might
- Obligation – have to, must

# Modal Verbs



- Conclusion – must, should, can't
- Prohibition – mustn't, can't, may not
- Advice – should, ought to, could, might
- Offer – shall, would
- Suggestion – shall, would, should



I would if I could, but I can't so I won't.

# Dilemma



“I’m in love with two girls. One is very beautiful but has no money, the other is ugly and has lots of money. *Who should I marry?*”

“ Well, I’m sure that you must really love the beautiful one, so I think you *should* marry her.”

“OK, thank you very much for your advice.”

“Don’t mention it. By the way, I wonder if you could give me the name and telephone number of the other girl?”

# Suggestion



- You *could* talk to your parents about whether or you *should* marry her.
- You *might* consider taking up meditation to help you sleep better.
- *Shouldn't* we have a pizza instead?
- What *should* I do today?

# Advice



- You *should* brush your teeth twice a day.
- We *could* meet for dinner at the weekend.  
(less strong)
- We *ought to* take a taxi, it's too far to walk.
- You *had better* study for the exam tomorrow.

# Offer



- *Shall* we dance?
- *Would* you like to join my friends and I tonight?

# Ability



- I *can* dance and sing.
- I *can't* pilot a ship.
- I *am unable* to find the schedule for today.
- I knew I *was able to* win before we started playing.

# Possibility



- Smoking *can* cause cancer.
- John *could* be fired for stealing.
- I *may* see you tomorrow before you leave.
- I *might* go swimming after work today. (less probable)



Although this married couple enjoyed their new fishing boat together, it was the husband who was behind the wheel operating the boat.

He was concerned about what might happen in an emergency. So one day out on the lake he said to his wife, “Please take the wheel, dear. Pretend that I am having a heart attack. You must get the boat safely to shore and dock it.” So she drove the boat to shore.

Later that evening, the wife walked into the living room where her husband was watching television. She sat down next to him, switched the TV channel, and said to him, “Please go into the kitchen, dear. Pretend I’m having a heart attack and set the table, cook dinner and wash the dishes.”



- A wheel is a circular device that helps us control a vehicle.
- The man in our jokes was operating the boat, that means he was controlling the functioning of the boat, he was running the boat.
- To be concerned means to be worried.
- If someone docks a ship, they bring it into a dock (harbor)
- When you switch channels, you change from one channel to another.

# Permission



- *Can* I wear my sunglasses in my work uniform today?
- *May* I please have a glass of water?
- *May* is formal, more polite and better to use.

# Obligation



- You *must* be at work tomorrow before 8:00.
- You *mustn't* be late.
- I *have to* go to see the Doctor in the morning.

# Lack of Obligation



- You *don't have to* clean your room today.
- You *needn't* water the garden this evening.  
It's going to rain tonight.
- *Needn't* is less common.

# Deduction/Conclusion



- He *must* live near here because he comes to work on foot.
- You're going to China? That *should* be interesting. (less certain)
- It *can't* be a burglar. All the doors and windows are locked.

# Prohibition



- 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.
- You *may not* have dessert until you finish your dinner.

# Your turn!



If you had a choice of two people to date, one is attractive but stupid the other is ugly and intelligent, who do you choose? Why?