

Modal verbs

Spotlight 10
Module 4

Main modal verbs

- Must
- Have to
- Ought to
- Need to
- Should
- Can/ could
- May/might

Main meanings

- **Must** – obligation imposed by the speaker / logical assumption
- **Have to** – obligation imposed by a situation (external obligation)
- **Ought to** – moral obligation denoting a duty, advice or a reasonable action

- **Need to** – necessity
- **Should** – suggestion, advice
- **Can** – possibility
 - ability
 - permission
- **Could** – past possibility, ability
 - asking for permission
- **May** – request
 - permission
- **Might** – possibility (higher degree of doubt)
 - polite suggestion

Affirmative / negative differences

- Have to (obligation)/don't have to (lack of obligation)
- Must (obligation)/mustn't (prohibition)
- Need to (necessity)/don't need to (lack of necessity)
- Can (possibility)/can't (impossibility/ logical assumption)