MODAL VERBS

Using the modal verbs we may, for example, ask for permission to do something, grant permission to someone, give or receive advice, make or respond to requests and offers, give instructions or orders, express duty or obligation etc.

- Modal verbs can be used to express different levels of politeness.

- We can also use them to express different degrees of probability.

Modal verbs have two major functions which can be defined as **primary (dictionary meaning)** and **secondary (probability**).
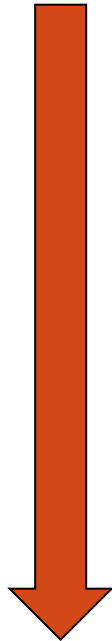
Primary functions of modal verbs

- Ability
- Permission
- Prohibition
- Prediction
- Duty (escapable obligation)
- Obligation (inescapable)
- Request; Offer
- Possibility
- *Absence of obligation*

- **CAN**
- **MAY** (might)/ **CAN** (could)
- **MUSTN'T** / **CANNOT**
- **WILL** / **SHALL** / **MAY**
- SHOULD
- MUST
- CAN / WILL
- CAN / CANNOT
- *NEEDN'T*

Secondary functions of modal verbs

In their secondary function, the modal verbs (except shall) can be used to express the degree of certainty/uncertainty or probability.

ALMOST CERTAIN

VERY UNCERTAIN

- **MUST**
- **WILL**
- **WOULD**
- **OUGHT TO**
- **SHOULD**
- **CAN**
- **COULD**
- **MAY**
- **MIGHT**

Some important grammar aspects

- The negative is formed by the addition of **_not_** after the modal.
- In informal spoken English **_not_** is often reduced to **_n't_**.
- Modals in affirmative do not have contracted forms (except for **_will_** and **_would_**: I'll, I'd).
- In questions, the modal verbs behave like the auxiliar verbs: do, have or be.
- Only one modal verb can be used in a single verb phrase.
- Tenses: all modals can refer to the immediate present or the future, therefore 'present' is not always a reliable label (I can call him today / I can call him tomorrow).
- There is no progressive form for modals. But we can put the verb that follows the modal into the progressive form.
- Verbs that share some characteristics with the modals: be able/ have to / ought to / need

Check out these examples and analyse them.

- I can lift 25 kg. She can speak French.
- I couldn't finish the job.
- You can go now.
- It can be quite cold in winter.
- He can't be at home. He could have left last night.
- May I borrow your umbrella, please?
- You must do it. I had to do it. I'll have to do it.
- We mustn't forget our passports.
- You must have seen him.
- It must be Anna calling.
- You needn't wait for me.
- The exam can't have been difficult if he passed without studying.
- She should be at home by now.
- Shall I open the window?

Past tense of modals

- When the sentence refers to the primary meaning (can: ability/permission, must: obligation) the past form is expressed mainly by :
- Can: could / was(were) able or was(were) allowed
- Must: had to / was(were) obliged to

- When the sentence refers to the secondary meaning (can: possibility/probability (or sth that could have happened but didn't happen), must: certainty) the past form is mainly expressed by:
- Can: could + have + past participle
- Must: must + have + past participle

PRIMARY VERB

A primary verb is one of a group of three verbs that are important in English in the construction of aspect (progressive/continuous,perfect) voice and of negative,interrogative and emphatic forms of full verbs.The primary verbs are be,have and do.

BE

Be:(be,am,was.were,been,being)is used as a full verb both as the existential verb and as a copular verb.(My daughter is a teacher)

HAVE

Have (have,has,had,having)is used as a full verb with a variety of meanings,many associated with the idea of possession.(Luke has a fantastic library) or experiencing/doing (I have a lot of problems with that. Mary has a shower as soon as she gets home from work.)

DO

DO:(do,does,did,done,doing) is used as a full verb with a variety of meanings (It must do something about that.(Have you done your homework?.)
As an auxiliary verb,it used for three forms of the full verbs:the negative (She doesn not like you),the emphatic (Did Paul say anything to you?)and the emphatic (We did enjoy the play).It is also used as code ,standing in for the full verb,in for example,question tags.(That went off quite well didn"t it?)

LEXICAL VERB

In linguistics a lexical verb or full verb is member of an open class of verbs that includes all verbs expert auxiliary verbs.Lexical verbs typically e[press action state,or other predicate meaning. In contrast, au[iliary verbs express grammatical meaning. The verb phrase of as sentence is generally headed by a lexical verb.
The descriptor lexical is applied to the words of a language's lexicon, often to indicate a content word, as distinct from a function word.