

English With Nimafar

Modal Verbs

Overview:

Modal verbs are essential in English for expressing **possibility, ability, necessity, permission, and more**. 🎯 By the end of this lesson, you'll be able to use **modal verbs naturally and correctly** in different contexts! 🗣️

Date:

03/14/2025

◆ What Are Modal Verbs? 🤔

Modal verbs are special auxiliary verbs that **modify the meaning of the main verb**. They help express:

- ✅ **Possibility & Probability** (e.g., *might, may, could*)
- ✅ **Ability** (e.g., *can, could*)
- ✅ **Obligation & Necessity** (e.g., *must, have to, should*)
- ✅ **Permission & Prohibition** (e.g., *can, may, must not*)
- ✅ **Advice & Suggestions** (e.g., *should, ought to*)

📝 Examples:

- She *can* swim very fast. 🏊
- You *must* wear a seatbelt. 🚗
- He *may* arrive late. ⌚
- We *should* exercise daily. 💪

◆ How Do Modal Verbs Work?

Unlike regular verbs, **modal verbs**:

1. **Don't take "-s" in the third-person singular**

✓ He *can* sing. ✗ He *cans* sing.

2. **Are followed by the base form of the verb (without "to")**

✓ She *must go* now. ✗ She *must to go* now.

3. **Don't use auxiliary verbs (do/does/did) in questions & negatives**

✓ *Can* you help me? ✗ *Do you can* help me?

✓ He *must not* be late. ✗ He *does not must* be late.

◆ Modal Verbs of Ability 💪

Modal Verb	Present	Past	Future
can	I <i>can</i> swim.	✗ (No direct past form)	I <i>will be able to</i> swim.
could	She <i>could</i> run fast (past ability).	She <i>could</i> run fast.	She <i>will be able to</i> run fast.
be able to	We <i>are able to</i> help.	We <i>were able to</i> help.	We <i>will be able to</i> help.

🚩 **Common Mistake:**

✗ *I could to play the piano.* → ✓ *I could play the piano.*

◆ Modal Verbs of Obligation & Necessity 📌

Modal Verb	Positive Meaning	Negative Meaning
must	Strong obligation → <i>You must wear a seatbelt.</i> 🚗	Prohibition → <i>You must not smoke here.</i> 🚫
have to	External obligation → <i>I have to work late.</i> 🏢	Lack of obligation → <i>You don't have to come early.</i> ⌚
should	Advice → <i>You should drink water.</i> 💧	Weak prohibition → <i>You shouldn't eat too much sugar.</i> 🍬
must not	Strong prohibition → <i>You must not touch this wire!</i> ⚡	🚫 VERY STRONG (like a rule/law)
don't have to	No obligation → <i>You don't have to bring food.</i> 🍴	🚫 Means it's optional, not prohibited

📌 Key Difference:

- **"Must not"** (🚫 PROHIBITED) → *You must not park here.* 🚫 (It's against the law!)
- **"Don't have to"** (😌 OPTIONAL) → *You don't have to bring a gift.* 🎁 (You can if you want.)

◆ Modal Verbs of Possibility & Probability 🎲

Modal Verb	Positive Meaning	Negative Meaning
will	100% certain → <i>He will be here soon.</i> 🕒	❌ No negative form with "will" for probability
must	Very likely → <i>She must be at work.</i> 🏢	Logical impossibility → <i>She must not be at home.</i> 🏠❌
might / may	50% possible → <i>It might rain later.</i> ☔	Weak negative possibility → <i>It might not rain.</i> ☀️
could	Possible but less certain → <i>He could be sleeping.</i> 😴	Weak negative → <i>He couldn't be sleeping now.</i> 😬
can't / cannot	Impossible → <i>She can't be at home.</i> 🏠❌	🚫 STRONG negative meaning (100% impossible)

🚩 Common Mistake:

❌ *It will can rain tomorrow.* → ✅ *It can rain tomorrow.*

❌ Forget 'have' in Future Perfect

- He will finished the project. 🚫
- He will have finished the project. ✅

❌ Forget 'been' in Future Perfect Continuous

- They will have working here for ten years. 🚫
- They will have been working here for ten years. ✅

❌ Confusing Future Perfect and Future Perfect Continuous

- By 2025, she will have worked here for 10 years. ❌ (wrong because it emphasizes duration)
- By 2025, she will have been working here for 10 years. ✅

◆ Modal Verbs for Permission & Prohibition 🚦

Modal Verb	Positive Meaning	Negative Meaning
can	Informal permission → <i>You can leave early.</i> 🚶	Prohibition → <i>You can't park here.</i> 🚫
may	Formal permission → <i>May I sit here?</i>	🚫 Less common in negatives: <i>You may not enter.</i>
must not	🚩 Strict Prohibition → <i>You must not enter.</i>	🚫 Means "not allowed" (rules/laws)
cannot (can't)	Strong prohibition → <i>You can't smoke here.</i> 🚫	🚫 Used for logical impossibilities too

🚩 Difference Between "Can't" and "Must Not"

- "Can't" = Logically Impossible → *It can't be true!*
- "Must not" = Strict Rule/Law → *You must not be late!*

◆ Modal Verbs for Advice & Suggestions 💡

Modal Verb	Positive Meaning	Negative Meaning
should	Advice → <i>You should sleep early.</i> 😴	Soft warning → <i>You shouldn't eat too much.</i> 🔍
ought to	Stronger advice → <i>You ought to apologize.</i>	Less common in negatives: <i>You ought not to do that.</i>
had better	Warning → <i>You had better study.</i> 📖	🚩 STRONG warning → <i>You had better not be late!</i>

🚩 Common Mistake:

❌ *You should to study.* → ✅ *You should study.*

◆ Advanced Notes 🧠

🚀 Tricky Cases & Rare Uses

● "Shall" vs. "Will"

- **Shall** is used for offers/suggestions in British English:
✓ *Shall we go?*
- **Will** is more common in American English.

● Double Modals in Some Dialects

Some English dialects use double modals (not standard grammar):

✓ *You might could help me.* (Southern US English)

● "Must" vs. "Can't" for Logical Deductions

✓ *He must be at home.* (I'm sure he is.)

✓ *He can't be at home.* (I'm sure he isn't.)

Examples 📖

1 You **must** wear a seatbelt while driving. 🚗

2 She **can** swim very fast. 🏊

3 I **might** visit my grandparents this weekend. 🏠

4 You **shouldn't** eat too much fast food. 🍔

5 He **could** be sleeping right now. 😴

6 You **don't have to** bring anything to the party. 🎉

7 **May** I use your phone for a moment? 📱

8 They **must not** enter this restricted area. 🚫

9 We **can't** believe how fast time flies. ⌚

10 He **has to** wake up early for work. ⌚

1 1 If you train harder, you **might** win the championship. 🏆

1 2 You **had better** apologize before it's too late. 😞

1 3 They **should** drink more water to stay healthy. 💧

1 4 She **was able to** solve the puzzle quickly. 🧩

1 5 We **must** respect our elders. 🙏

1 6 The teacher said we **may not** use calculators during the test. ❌

1 7 You **need to** focus on your studies. 📖

1 8 He **should not** have said that to his boss. 😬

1 9 This situation **can't** be real! 🤯

2 0 She **would** always call me when she needed help. ☎️

- 2 1 You **ought to** be more careful when crossing the street. 🚦
- 2 2 I **could** ride a bike when I was five years old. 🚲
- 2 3 We **must** submit the report by tomorrow. 📝
- 2 4 You **mustn't** forget your passport. 🛂
- 2 5 I **might not** go to the meeting if it rains. ☔
- 2 6 She **should** take a break from work. ☂️
- 2 7 They **don't have to** wear a uniform at school. 👕
- 2 8 You **can** borrow my book if you return it later. 📖
- 2 9 You **should have** told me earlier! ⏪
- 3 0 You **cannot** enter without a ticket. 🎫
- 3 1 We **might** have taken the wrong road. 🗺️
- 3 2 He **must** be the new manager. 🏢
- 3 3 If you feel unwell, you **should** see a doctor. 🏥
- 3 4 The restaurant **may** be full tonight, so we should book a table. 🍴
- 3 5 She **can't** possibly be 50 years old; she looks much younger. 🧒
- 3 6 You **must** complete your assignment before leaving. 🎓
- 3 7 I **should not** have eaten so much cake. 🍰
- 3 8 If you see John, you **can** tell him the news. 📰
- 3 9 You **must not** touch that wire—it's dangerous! ⚡
- 4 0 He **couldn't** believe his eyes when he saw the surprise. 🎁

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Teaching in a
250,000-member
Discord server

teachernimafar@gmail.com

