



Modal Verbs

AND HOW TO USE THEM

Modal Verbs: Forms

- ▶ Modal verbs do not change form, unlike **regular verbs**
 - ▶ She runs, she can run
 - ▶ She goes running, she will go running
 - ▶ She **ran**, she could run
 - ▶ She had **run**, she could have run
- ▶ Modal verbs are always the first verb in a series of verbs.
 - ▶ She could have been injured!
 - ▶ You must have been so tired...

Modals: The Present

MEANING AND USE

Present Modals – Meaning (1)

- ▶ Can – present “be able to,” “be allowed to”
 - ▶ She can swim. (= **is able to**)
 - ▶ Can she go to the birthday party? Yes, she can.
- ▶ May – present “be allowed to,” present possibility
 - ▶ May I go to the birthday party? Yes, you may. (= **can**)
 - ▶ She may be lost; she is not usually late. (= **Maybe** she is...)
- ▶ Could, Might – present possibility or guess (more doubt than **may**)
 - ▶ He could be at the park already.
 - ▶ He might be worried about her.

Present Modals – Meaning (2)

- ▶ Might, Could – present polite request (see **can, may**)
 - ▶ Might/Could I have some tea?
 - ▶ Could you help me with this project?
 - ▶ I could use some help if anyone is available.
- ▶ Would, Could – present hypothetical or unreal
 - ▶ His English is so good, he could pass that test right now!
 - ▶ I wouldn't climb that tree; it is small.

Present Modals – Meaning (3)

- ▶ Should, Ought to – present advice or guideline
 - ▶ You should finish your homework early.
 - ▶ People ought to exercise every day.
- ▶ Must – present requirement or assumption
 - ▶ You must pay for your bus ticket.
 - ▶ You must be so tired after your trip!
- ▶ **(Will – Future)**

Modals: The Past

MEANING AND USE

Modals – Changing from Present to Past

▶ Can

▶ Means “be able to” – can → could, was/were able to

▶ She can swim. → She could swim as a kid.

▶ I can swim 200 meters → I wasn't able to swim 200 m that day.

▶ Means “be allowed to” – can → could, was/were allowed to

▶ Can she go? → Was she allowed to go? **Main clause: Could**

▶ Mom says I can go. → Mom said I could go.

Modals – Changing from Present to Past

- ▶ May
 - ▶ Means “be allowed to” – May → was allowed to
 - ▶ May she go? → Was she allowed to go?
 - ▶ Possibility – May → may have
 - ▶ She may be lost → She may have been lost.

Modals – Changing from Present to Past

- ▶ Could, Might (past possibility or guess, more doubt than **may**)
 - ▶ → Could have, might have (= **Maybe** was)
 - ▶ He could have been at the park already.
 - ▶ He might have been worried about her.
- ▶ Will (Past reported speech) → would
 - ▶ I will be there → I said I would be there
 - ▶ My mom: "I will visit you." → My mom said she would visit me.

Modals – Changing from Present to Past

- ▶ Would, Could – hypothetical or unreal → would have, could have
 - ▶ His English was so good, he could have passed that test!
 - ▶ I wouldn't have climbed that tree; it was small.
- ▶ Should, ought to – advice, criticism → should have, ought to have
 - ▶ She should have called me earlier!
 - ▶ This project ought to have been completed.

Modals – Changing from Present to Past

- ▶ Must – requirement, obligation → had to
 - ▶ He had to pay for his bus ticket.
 - ▶ I had to file my taxes last year.
- ▶ Must – logical prediction → must have
 - ▶ He's not here yet; he must have gotten lost.

Modals – Changing from Present to Past

Summary

Modal → Modal + Have

- ▶ May → May have
 - ▶ Possibility only
- ▶ Could → could have
 - ▶ Possibility only
- ▶ Might → Might have
 - ▶ Possibility only
- ▶ Would → would have
 - ▶ Unreal/counterfactual only
- ▶ Should → Should have

- ▶ Ought to → Ought to have
- ▶ Must → must have
 - ▶ Logical **must** only

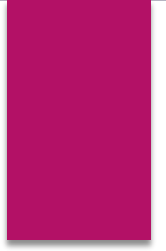
Modal → Other Verb

- ▶ Can → be able to
 - ▶ Ability only
- ▶ May, Can → be allowed to
 - ▶ Permission only

Modal → Other Modal

- ▶ Can → Could
 - ▶ Ability **if** description, not completed action
 - ▶ Permission **if** in reported speech
- ▶ Will → Would
 - ▶ Pending action in reported speech

Modals: The Future



Modals – Changing from Present to Future

- ▶ **Will** is the modal verb that always expresses future.
 - ▶ I will call you back later.
 - ▶ You won't believe this!
- ▶ For future expressions, it is also common to use **be going to**.
 - ▶ I'm going to study tonight.
 - ▶ She's going to miss the train!
- ▶ Occasionally, **shall** is used instead. (Old-fashioned)
 - ▶ Gandalf: "You shall not pass!"

Modals – Changing from Present to Future

- ▶ Possibility modals can be used for future predictions
 - ▶ It **may/might/could** rain tomorrow.
- ▶ Advice (**should, ought to**) and orders (**must**) automatically refer to the future
 - ▶ You should wash the dishes (soon, later, etc).
 - ▶ You must not lose this key next semester.
- ▶ All other modal expressions in the future start with **will**
 - ▶ Can → will be able to, will be allowed to
 - ▶ May (permission) → will be allowed to