

MODAL VERBS

MODAL VERBS	USE	FORMATION (AFFIRMATIVE, INTERROGATIVE, NEGATIVE)
CAN	possibility, ability and permission in the present or future. neg. - logical impossibility	I can speak many languages. Can I go to the party? She can't be at home, I saw her 10 minutes ago.
COULD	ability, possibility and permission in the past or in polite requests	He could swim when he was only four. Could you help me, please? I couldn't understand him.
BE ABLE TO	ability and opportunity in the past, present or future (specific occasion)	I am able to get all the work done. Were you able to stop the car in time? They won't be able to stop it.
MAY	possible and probable actions in the future; permissions and possible conditions	You may telephone from here. May I take a photo? He may not go to the party. He's sick.
MIGHT	possible actions in the future or improbable events or situations.	I might be working late tomorrow. He might not be at home. What might happen?
MUST	obligation, necessity, deduction; in the negative form - prohibition	You must take your medication regularly. My glasses must be here somewhere. He mustn't tell anyone what I said.
HAVE TO	obligation	I have to work on Sundays. Do you have to get your passport? She doesn't have to go to the dentist.
WILL	facts in the future, predictions, invitations, characteristic behaviour	I'll wait for you if you like. Will you have a cup of tea? She's on diet. She won't eat at all.
WOULD	past prediction, prediction about a possible situation; politeness; past of "will"	How about a cup of tea? That would be nice. Would you go without me? I wouldn't go without you.
SHALL	offers, suggestions	Shall I close the window? Shall we dance?
SHOULD	advice; past form of "shall"; logical consequence	You should accept the job. Should we tell him the news? She shouldn't be so shy.
OUGHT TO	saying what is the right thing to do	She ought to be working. You oughtn't to forget your obligations.

A) Complete the sentences with appropriate modal verbs.

1. _____ you _____ to get up early?
2. They're having a baby. They _____ have to buy a bigger house.
3. I'm sorry I _____ help you with your homework.
4. _____ we go out tonight?
5. Why don't you apply for that job? You _____ get it.
6. I think we _____ do something to stop pollution.
7. _____ I borrow this book?
8. My wife is waiting for me. I _____ not be late.

B) Write a second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first. Use the words in brackets.

1. Perhaps Mary is doing overtime. (may)

2. I managed to go to university. (able)

3. They should think very well before acting. (ought)

4. It's forbidden to smoke here. (mustn't)

5. It's impossible for you to see it at this distance. (can't)

6. It is possible that Anne did not see the message. (might)

7. I advise you to study more in order to pass the exam. (should)

8. She was able to play the piano when she was only four. (could)

9. _____

C) Complete the conversation between Sarah and her mother.

Sarah: Mon, (1) _____ I go to the cinema with Susan?

Mother: No, you (2) _____. You (3) _____ study for tomorrow's test. You (4) _____ be more responsible.

Sarah: But, mom, you (5) _____ at least let me rent a movie to see later on with Susan?

Mother: OK, you (6) _____ do that. But you (7) _____ start studying right now. You (8) _____ improve your marks.

Susan: I (9) _____ like to, but I don't know if I (10) _____.

Answer key

A)

1. Do... have;

2. will;

3. can't;

4. Shall;
5. might;
6. should;
7. Can;
8. must

B)

1. Mary may be doing overtime.
2. I was able to go to university.
3. They ought to think very well before acting.
4. You mustn't smoke here.
5. You can't see it at this distance.
6. Anne might not have seen the message.
7. You should study more to pass the exam.
8. She could play the piano when she was only four.

C)

1. can / may
2. can't / may not
3. have to
4. should
5. could
6. can / may
7. have to
8. have to
9. would
10. can