

Modal Verbs Exercises

Level: A2, B1

How modal verbs work

Modal verbs (can, could, may, might, must, should, will, would) add meaning like ability, permission, obligation or probability to another verb — and they follow special grammar rules.

Form: modal + base verb: She can swim (never 'to swim' or 'swims')

No -s / no do: He must go (not 'musts'); negatives and questions without 'do': Can you...? You shouldn't...

Ability: can / could: I can drive. She could read at age four.

Obligation: must / have to: You must wear a seatbelt. | Prohibition: mustn't

Advice: should / shouldn't: You should see a doctor.

Possibility: may / might / could: It might rain later.

Exercise 1: Choose the correct modal

Select the modal verb that best fits each situation.

- You ___ smoke in the hospital — it's strictly forbidden.
a) mustn't b) don't have to c) shouldn't
- I ___ ride a bike when I was five years old.
a) can b) could c) must
- You look exhausted. You ___ take a day off.
a) should b) must not c) may
- It's a holiday tomorrow, so I ___ get up early.
a) mustn't b) can't c) don't have to
- Take an umbrella — it ___ rain this afternoon.
a) must b) might c) should

Exercise 2: Complete the sentences

Type the missing modal verb (can, can't, must, mustn't, should, shouldn't, might...).

- ___ you help me carry these boxes, please? (polite request)
- In most countries, drivers ___ wear a seatbelt — it's the law. (obligation)
- You ___ eat so much sugar — it's bad for your teeth. (negative advice)
- I'm not sure where Anna is. She ___ be at the gym. (possibility)
- Sorry, I ___ come to the party on Saturday — I'm working. (impossibility)

Exercise 3: Put the words in order

Click the words in the correct order to build the sentence.

11. Put the words in the correct order: **swim / she / can / very well**

12. Put the words in the correct order: **I / your pen / may / borrow / ?**

13. Put the words in the correct order: **be / you / late / shouldn't / for class**

14. Put the words in the correct order: **must / a visa / travelers / get / before the trip**

Exercise 4: True or false?

Decide if each statement about modal verbs is true or false.

15. "She cans speak Italian" is correct English. True / False
16. 'Mustn't' and 'don't have to' mean the same thing. True / False
17. After a modal verb, we use the base form of the verb without 'to'. True / False
18. 'Might' expresses a smaller probability than 'will'. True / False

Answer key

Exercise 1: Choose the correct modal

1. a) mustn't
2. b) could
3. a) should
4. c) don't have to
5. b) might

Exercise 2: Complete the sentences

6. can / could / will / would
7. must / have to
8. shouldn't / should not
9. might / may / could
10. can't / cannot

Exercise 3: Put the words in order

11. she can swim very well
12. may I borrow your pen ?
13. you shouldn't be late for class
14. travelers must get a visa before the trip

Exercise 4: True or false?

15. False
16. False
17. True
18. True