

CAN. SHOULD. MUST. WOULD.

REAL-LIFE MODALS / QUICK REVIEW + PRACTICE

Use these four verbs to talk about ability, advice, rules and polite choices. Read the examples, then use the language in real situations.

CAN Ability & permission I can work remotely. / Can I use your charger?	SHOULD Advice & recommendations You should save a copy of your files.
MUST Strong rules & obligations All visitors must show ID at reception.	WOULD Polite requests, offers & preferences Would you send me the link? / I would like some tea.

The structure is simple

Affirmative	Subject + modal + base verb	She can speak English.
Negative	Subject + modal + not + base verb	You should not skip meals.
Question	Modal + subject + base verb?	Would you like some water?

TWO IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES

- Mustn't** = prohibited: You **mustn't** park here.
- Don't have to** = not necessary: You **don't have to** print the ticket.
- Would like + to + verb**: I **would like to** book a table.

Remember: No *to* after can, should, must or would. Modals do not take -s, and modal questions do not need do/does.

01 What does the speaker mean?

Write the correct function next to each sentence. Use each label once.

WORD BANK

ability / permission / advice / obligation / offer / preference / prohibition / polite request

1. I can understand most podcasts when the speakers talk slowly.

Meaning: _____

2. Can I borrow your charger for a minute?

Meaning: _____

3. You should make a list before you go shopping.

Meaning: _____

4. You must wear a helmet on this construction site.

Meaning: _____

5. Would you like some water before we start?

Meaning: _____

6. I would prefer to stay home tonight.

Meaning: _____

7. You mustn't share your password with anyone.

Meaning: _____

8. Would you send me the address, please?

Meaning: _____

02 Choose the best modal

Use the situation to choose the most appropriate answer.

1. I ___ drive, but I do not have a car right now.

A. must B. would C. can

2. My suggestion: you ___ call the restaurant first. It gets busy on Fridays.

A. should B. can C. would

3. Visitors ___ show photo ID at reception. It is a building rule.

A. would B. must C. should

4. ___ you like a glass of water?

A. Should B. Would C. Must

5. ___ I use this seat? Is anyone sitting here?

A. Must B. Should C. Can

02 Choose the best modal / continued

6. I ___ like to book a table for two, please.

A. would B. should C. can

7. You ___ wear a seat belt in the car. It is the law.

A. can B. must C. would

8. I ___ cook a few dishes, but I am still learning.

A. should B. would C. can

9. Your computer keeps freezing. My advice: you ___ save your work more often.

A. must B. should C. would

10. ___ you email me the document, please?

A. Would B. Must C. Should

11. If you want to sleep better, you ___ avoid coffee late at night.

A. would B. must C. should

12. I ___ prefer to take the train if possible.

A. can B. would C. must

03 Find and fix the mistake

Each sentence has one grammar mistake. Write the corrected sentence.

1. She cans speak Italian.

2. You should to bring a jacket.

3. He musts wear an ID badge.

4. Would you to open the door, please?

5. Do you can finish this today?

6. You mustn't to park here.

7. I would likes a coffee, please.

8. She shouldn't goes to bed so late.

04 Advice, rules or no obligation?

Choose should, must, mustn't or don't have to. Use the context in brackets.

1. You have a headache. You ___ drink some water. (advice)

2. This door is a fire exit. You ___ block it. (prohibition)

3. Company policy: all employees ___ wear a badge. (obligation)

4. The extra meeting is optional. You ___ attend. (not necessary)

5. You want to save money. You ___ cook at home more often. (advice)

6. The museum does not allow flash photos. You ___ use flash. (prohibition)

7. This document is confidential. You ___ keep it private. (obligation)

8. The event is free. You ___ buy a ticket. (not necessary)

05 Put the words in order

Make complete sentences and questions. Remember the modal + base verb pattern.

1. can / I / tomorrow / finish / the report

2. should / you / back up / your photos / regularly

3. must / visitors / sign in / before entering / the building

4. would / I / like / a table / by the window

5. would / you / please / send / me / the link

05 Word order / continued

6. we / can / meet / after / the class

7. mustn't / your password / you / share / with anyone

8. she / should / ask / for help / if / she needs it

9. you / would / like / to come / with us / on Saturday

10. can / your colleague / speak / another language

06 Say it another way

Rewrite the idea using the word in the colored label. More than one answer may be possible.

1. I am able to work from home on Tuesdays. (CAN)

2. My advice is to make a reservation. (SHOULD)

3. It is a rule to show your ticket before you enter. (MUST)

4. Ask politely: send me the presentation. (WOULD)

5. Say politely that you want a tea. (WOULD LIKE)

06 Say it another way / continued

6. Parking here is forbidden. (MUSTN'T)

7. It is not necessary to print the form. (DON'T HAVE TO)

8. Ask permission to use someone's phone. (CAN)

07 Real-life mini-dialogues

Complete each dialogue with the right modal. Some dialogues need two answers.

1. AT A CAFÉ

A: ___ you like something to drink?

B: Yes, I ___ like some tea, please.

2. AT A SHARED OFFICE

A: ___ I use this chair?

B: Yes, you ___. No one is using it.

3. BEFORE A FLIGHT

A: The airline says passengers ___ show their ID.

B: We ___ arrive a little early too. That is my advice.

4. A FRIEND NEEDS HELP

A: I feel overwhelmed by my to-do list.

B: You ___ choose your three most important tasks for today.

08 Complete about you

Write true sentences. Use the modal at the beginning of each prompt.

1. One thing I can do well is ...

2. One thing I can't do yet is ...

3. When I have too much work, I should ...

4. One rule I must follow at work, school or home is ...

5. Something people mustn't do in a public place is ...

6. Something I don't have to do on weekends is ...

7. At a restaurant, I would like ...

8. If I had a free weekend, I would ...

09 Longer personal answers

Give complete answers with a reason or one extra detail.

EXAMPLE

Question: What can you do well?

Short: I can cook.

Stronger: I can cook simple meals, and I usually make dinner on weekdays.

1. What can you do now that you could not do a few years ago?

2. What should someone do before an important job interview?

09 Longer personal answers / continued

3. What must people do to stay safe when they drive?

4. What would you order at a restaurant you like?

5. Would you rather work from home or in an office? Why?

6. What rule must people follow in a place you often visit?

10 Speaking challenge: plan a weekend trip

Work with a partner, or write a short conversation. You are planning a weekend trip together.

IN YOUR CONVERSATION, TRY TO USE

CAN for possibilities / **SHOULD** for suggestions

MUST for an important requirement / **WOULD** for a polite request or preference

What can you do there?

What should you plan or book?

What must you remember?

What would you like to do, and what would you ask politely?

FINAL CHECK: modal + base verb / clear meaning / at least one reason / a polite question.

GREAT WORK!

Use these four modal verbs when you make plans, ask for help, give advice and talk about rules in everyday English.