

Part II Grammar: Modal Verbs

The grammar part in this Unit is about modal verbs. What are modal verbs? What are the purposes of using them? Which of the following verbs do you know? What are their functions?

can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, ought to, will, would

These verbs are auxiliary verbs that provide additional and specific meaning to main verbs in sentences.

Do the following activities based on your previous knowledge on modal verbs. I will give you a brief note for you to recall your past lessons in the middle of the grammar section. When you do the activities, please do them in groups because you can share ideas and learn more about the verbs.

Activity 3.8:

Instruction: Match the two columns to identify the use of each modal verb.

1. ----- 2. ----- 3. ----- 4.-----
4. ----- 5. ----- 6. ----- 7. -----

No	Statements	Use
1	Zeberga should call Almaz soon after their first date.	a. obligation
2	Almaz should be happy to get his call.	b. possibility
3	Zeberga calls but she doesn't pick up, she must be working.	c. low probability
4	No problem, he can call her back later.	d. rational probability
5	Later he tells her they could go out to dinner again.	e. certainty
6	She says she may be available Friday.	f. polite request
7	Zeberga asks if he can call her back Friday morning.	g. permission
8	She says she could be in a meeting, the afternoon is better.	h. advice
9	Friday afternoon, Zeberga asks: May I pick you up at 6 pm?	i. capacity
10	He must be on time to make a good impression.	j. suggestion

Answers

8.

9.

10.

Activity 3.9:**Instruction:** Match each statement to a sentence with the same meaning.

No	Statement	Meaning
1	Tinsae must write a report tomorrow.	a. She needs to help him, or the report will not be finished on time.
2	Tinsae couldn't write it yesterday.	b. Rahel's boss says she is allowed to help Jack.
3	Rahel says she can help him tomorrow.	c. Tinsae will have to write a report tomorrow.
4	She has to help him, or the report will not be finished on time.	d. Rahel says she will be able to help him tomorrow.
5	Rahel's boss says she may help Jack.	e. Tinsae wasn't able to write it yesterday.

Answers

1. ----- 2. ----- 3. ----- 4. ----- 5. -----

Activity 3.10:**Instruction:** Complete each of the spaces in the text below by using a phrase from the following list.

may have landed

might have done this

must have used up all the food

can't have been easy

may have discovered the island

should have done this

could have been part

might have been gods

must not have landed

Easter Island

Easter Island, 3,000 km off the coast of Chile in the Pacific Ocean is very far from land. Today, it is a small island with few people or trees, but at one time a lot of people lived there. Scientists believe that the original

inhabitants _____ by
accident.
Around 100 people _____ on the western coast of the
island. But
then the number of inhabitants increased too quickly. Scientists agree that
the inhabitants _____ on the island and finally all died. The
Easter Island statues are famous, but nobody knows why they are there or
why there are so many. The statues _____ or
Easter Island _____ of a much bigger island. The statues are very
large and heavy, so they _____ to
move. Scientists still do not know how the inhabitants. _____.

Notes on Modal verbs and their functions

Modal verbs are those helping verbs, which express the 'mode' or 'manner' of the actions indicated by the main verbs. They express modes such as ability, possibility, probability, permission, obligation, etc. The most commonly used modal verbs are ***shall, should, will, would, can, could, may, might, must, ought to, used to, need and dare.***

Modal verbs are used to:

- Ask permission— may, can, could

Examples: *May I come in?*

Could I use your pen, please?

- Make a request— can, could

Example: *Could you please give me the doctor's telephone number?*

- Express a possibility—may, might, could **Example:** *It might rain during the night.*

- Give advice or suggestion— should

Example: *You should wear a helmet while riding your motorbike.*

- Express necessity or compulsion— must, have to

Examples: *We must slow down while driving in front of a school. I have to submit my project by tomorrow.*

- Express prohibition **Example:** *You must not talk loudly in the library.*

- Express a promise or intention— will, shall

Example: *I will mail you my address.*

- Express a wish—may

Example: *May you have a long life!*

A modal verb does not change according to the number or person of the subject. **Examples:** *He can learn. I can learn. You can learn.*

They can learn. We can learn.

A modal verb is always used with a verb in its basic form. The modal takes the tense while the main verb remains in its dictionary form.

Examples: *I can run. I may run. I could run. I might run.*

Modals can be used alone in response to a question.

Examples: Can you sing? I can.

Will you sing? I will.

Will you come? I may./I will.

Modals, when joined with 'not' to form a negative, can be contracted.

Examples: *I cannot run. I can't run.*

I do not run. I don't run.

I will not run. I won't run.

Activity 3.11:

Instruction: *Complete the text below with the given phrases in the box.*

can't be can't have could take may get may not have

might be must be must be

As a result of the flooding, as many as 10,000 families 1 homeless, although the figure is

only an estimate. "The emergency services are working hard, but I'm sure they 2-----
more

than 20 helicopters. It 3 ----days to reach everyone and take them to safety,' said an aid

worker in the area. 'Conditions for those families still waiting to be rescued
4 -----
very

difficult. There 5 ----- any clean water to drink and everyone 6 --- very cold.'

Worryingly, more rain is forecast, so the floods 7 - worse in the next few days. The

emergency services 8 time to reach everyone before the waters rise again

Answers

1. ----- 5.
2. ----- 6.
3. ----- 7.
4. -----

Activity 3. 12:

Instruction: *Read the reference material below and read about modal verbs and share what you have read to your group members. (If you don't find this book, refer to any material available to you)*

Reference material

Thomson & Pertinent (1986). *A Practical English Grammar*. Oxford University Press: UK.