

# OVERVIEW

## 1 THE BASICS

The ten modal auxiliaries are:

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

- Modals come before the infinitive form of a verb without *to* (except *ought to*):  
*I may meet her tomorrow.* (see Watch out! opposite)
- Modals never change form. They do not have *-ed*, *-s*, or *-ing* endings:  
*Maria may join us.*
- Modals never use *do* when forming questions or negatives. To form negatives we use *not* after the modal and before the verb:  
*Will you come?*  
*You mustn't worry so much.*
- We can use modals with the Continuous form of a verb:  
*She should be arriving soon.*
- We can use modals with the passive form of a verb:  
*The interview can be arranged for another day.*
- Modals are used in short answers and question tags:  
*You will apply for the job, won't you? Well, I might.*
- Modals usually refer to events in the present or future:  
*I can come immediately, if you like.* (= present)  
*I may ring you later.* (= future)
- However, some modals refer to the past:  
*I could read before I went to school.*
- Other modals need the addition of *have* to make a modal Perfect:  
*I should have realised earlier.*
- Sometimes it's necessary to choose another verb:  
*I was able to finish before I went out.*  
*We managed to find the right address.*
- We use other verbs with similar meanings to modals. These verbs always use *to*. They include *be able to*, *have to*, *used to*, *are / is / was to*, *be allowed to*, *be supposed to*, *manage to*:  
*I'm supposed to have let them know my decision by today.*  
*Will we be allowed to bring our own food?*

(For key difficulties with meaning, see the Watch out!, Unit 4, p.63.)

## watch out!

*Ought to* always uses *to*. Other modals never use *to*:

✗ *You oughtn't speak to your mother like that.*

*You must to go and see that film.*

✓ *You oughtn't to speak to your mother like that.*

*You must go and see that film.*

- *Dare* and *need* sometimes act like modals without *to*:

*I dare say. I never need see her again.*

- More often, they are ordinary verbs with *to*:

*He dared me to jump over the edge. Do you need to know now?*

(For more on *dare* and *need*, see Unit 15, Section 2.5)

## 2 MAIN USES OF MODALS 1

Here is a list of uses dealt with in this Unit with examples. For other uses, see Unit 4, Overview.

**Predicting** See Section 1

*I shall be in Piraeus next week. A live concert in Athens would be extremely popular. You won't like this food: it's very spicy. They ought to / should win the next game easily.*

**True, untrue, possible** See Section 2

*The fare may not be cheaper on Sundays but it's worth checking. I'm afraid you may have broken your wrist. Well actually, you could be right. He ought to have got home by now. You'll all know what I'm talking about, I'm sure. She won't have arrived yet.*

**Deduction** See Section 2

*It must be right: there's no other explanation. That can't be Monica: she's in Spain. You couldn't have seen her – she left three days ago.*

**Necessity** See Section 3

*You must leave immediately. We mustn't be late. You needn't pay me now. I didn't need to take so much money. I have to get there for eight o'clock.*

**Duty and advice** See Section 3

*What shall I do? Should I tell her she's made a mistake? You should always pay your bills on time. You really shouldn't have done that. Ought I to tell him I can't come?*

(For an alphabetical list of modals with their meanings, see pages 64–67.)

## SECTION I

### Predicting

#### 1 SAYING WE ARE SURE SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN

We can use *will* and *shall* to talk about what will happen. (For other ways of talking about the future, see Unit 1, Section 4):

- Exports will continue to rise over the next few months.*  
*I shall be staying in Tokyo for the next three days.*  
*We shan't stay long; we have to be at Mary's by six.*
- We can emphasise our certainty by adding *really*, (most) *certainly* / *definitely*, *almost certainly*, etc:  
*You definitely won't like the exhibition.*  
*You'll certainly like their new CD.*
- We can express doubt by adding *presumably*, (most) *probably*, etc:  
*You probably won't like their new single.*  
*You'll presumably be wanting some more.*

#### Differences between *shall* and *will*

We use *shall* with *I* or *we*. It's old-fashioned with other persons:

- I shan't have your X-ray results until next week.*  
*You shall go to her party, I promise.*
- When predicting something, or expressing determination (see Unit 4, Section 1), there is little difference in meaning between *shall* and *will*:  
*We shan't / won't arrive much before midnight, I'm afraid.* (= predicting) *I shall / will succeed, just you wait and see.* (= determination)
- But we use only *will*, not *shall*, to ask for predictions:  
*Will I get grade A, do you think?*
- We commonly use *shall* to make polite offers (see Unit 4, Section 1.2), or to ask advice:  
*Shall I turn the lights on?*  
*Shall I wear the green or the blue tie?*

#### 2 SAYING IT IS POSSIBLE SOMETHING WILL HAPPEN

We use *may*, *might* and *could* to say that something is possible (See Watch out! in Section 2 for *may not*, *might not* and *could not*):

- It may / might / could rain tomorrow.*
- However, we commonly use *will* rather than *may* / *might* / *could* in questions:  
*Will it rain tomorrow, do you think?*

- We can also use *would* in conditional sentences to predict what would happen if something else happened, or to talk about things that are very unlikely to happen:  
*He would get very annoyed if you rang him now.*  
*A sunny holiday in Wales? Now, that would be a miracle!*
- However, we can use *will* if other words in the sentence show that something is unlikely:  
*I doubt if we'll ever again experience a winter quite as cold as this one.*
- We can emphasise the degree of probability by adding other words:  
*She could conceivably come along a bit later.* (= it's just possible) *She may / might very well come along a bit later.* (= it's quite likely)
- The situation, stress and intonation, and other words we use in the statement can affect the degree of probability more than the modal itself:  
*I suppose she might come, but I doubt it.* (= it's doubtful) *Actually, I think she might very well come.* (= high probability)

#### 3 IN MY OPINION...

We can use *should* and *ought to* to make subjective predictions. (See also Section 2.2) In the negative, we avoid *oughtn't to*, and prefer *shouldn't*:

- They ought to / should win the next round easily.*  
*You shouldn't have trouble with traffic.*
- We use *should* and *ought to* to predict favourable events:  
~~✗ She should fail her driving test.~~  
~~The weather should be horrible tomorrow.~~  
✓ *She'll probably fail her driving test.*  
*She should / ought to do well in her driving test.*  
*The weather will be horrible tomorrow.*  
*It should be fine tomorrow.*

#### ? check

Which of the above points do these sentences illustrate?

- My mother will most certainly object to my going away over Christmas.
- We should qualify for the World Cup easily next time.
- I suppose it is just conceivable that we could get knocked out on penalties again.
- Soula would be furious if she found out what you were doing.
- Will we get there before nightfall, do you think?

## Practice

- 1** Tick (✓) the sentences that are acceptable. Correct the others.

*Example:* You might as well come with us if you've nothing better to do. ✓

- 1 I won't be in the country when you two are tying the knot.
- 2 How much longer do you think that noise will be going on?
- 3 I don't think I shall be able to join you until 8.30.
- 4 Shall I look OK if I wear this?
- 5 You shall have to put two first-class stamps on this envelope.
- 6 I think a weekend away would be a good idea.
- 7 Presumably we would be laughed at if we tried it in public.
- 8 If he maintains his current rate of progress, he should sail through the exam.
- 9 Looking like that, he should compare unfavourably with the other candidates.
- 10 According to statistics, smokers shouldn't live as long as non-smokers.

- 2** Which of the professions said what? Write the number of the profession next to the letter for the statement. Then, write what you think the 'it' refers to where it's underlined.

*Example:* i It may be necessary to take it away to put more memory in.

You write: i 0 (computer)

(0 computer engineer) 1 lawyer 2 barman  
3 hotel receptionist 4 gardener 5 sailor  
6 dentist 7 teacher 8 pilot

- a It may have to come out; we might well not be able to save it.
- b It should only be about ten minutes; then we expect the all-clear for take-off.
- c With any luck we'll get a centimetre or two over the weekend. We could certainly do with it.
- d Very light now, yes, but it might just get up later on, in which case...
- e We may be able to get it overturned on appeal.
- f It certainly won't be ready until the maid has been in.
- g Is that it, or will you be wanting another?
- h It will certainly improve if you try harder to imitate the patterns that native speakers use.
- (i It may be necessary to take it away to put more memory in.)

- 3** Underline the option that can best complete each of the following sentences. Sometimes only one, sometimes both, are possible.

*Example:* They won't most certainly / most certainly won't approve of the scheme.

- a He'll no doubt be / He should be late for the meeting.
- b She shall / She will go on to greater things, I have no doubt.
- c The whole team may as well / might as well give up and go back to carpentry.
- d Will / Shall I in any way be exploited in this new position?
- e I reckon they ought to / might just down tools and go home.
- f It shall / will be touch and go whether she survives.
- g The outcome might / can rest on this last handful of votes.
- h I have to say that I won't definitely / definitely won't attend the meeting.

- 4** For each of the following sentences, write a new sentence as similar as possible in meaning to the original sentence but using the word given.

*Example:* It's pointless going home now: it would be simpler to stay the night. **well**  
You might as well stay the night.

- a He's unlikely to have the common sense to ask for directions. **suppose**
- b I wouldn't have thought there's much chance of the package being here before Friday. **doubt**
- c I don't think we could expect that much of him. **asking**
- d I suppose it's possible that she will break the world record at the next meeting. **conceivably**
- e I can't see them finding the task insurmountable. **ought**
- f I think it's really quite likely that attitudes towards sunbathing will have to change soon. **well**
- g Might it be an idea if we pay the deposit for you? **like**
- h I don't foresee there being any major problems. **think**

## SECTION 2

### True, untrue, possible: present and past

#### 1 TRUE/UNTRUE

##### Present

In addition to predicting, we use *may*, *might*, *could* and *will* to say whether we think something is true or likely in the present:

*You may / might / could very well be right.* (= it's likely now) *You may / might / could conceivably / possibly have a point there.* (= it's not impossible) *That'll be my mother on the phone.* (= I'm quite sure) *Nikos'll be arriving in Brighton about now, I should think.* (= it's probable) *Surely he won't be there already?* (= I don't believe he is)

##### Past

We use *could have*, *will have*, *may have* and *might have* to speculate about the possibility of something happening in the past (see Unit 4, Section 2 for modals in the past):

*They may have finished already, for all I know.*  
*The doctor won't have had a chance to look at your X-ray yet.*

- Sometimes we speculate about something that didn't happen but we feel there was potential for it to happen:

*That wasn't a good idea – you might have hurt him.*

- Sometimes we speculate about what happened without knowing exactly what did happen:

*You may / might / could have done just enough to scrape through.*

#### watch out!

- We use *may not* / *might not* to express possibility (see also Section 4). We use *could not* to talk about deduction (see 3 below) and ability (see Unit 4, Section 2):

*I might / may not have her new phone number; let me check.* (= possibility)

*He couldn't be there already – it's over thirty miles away.* (= deduction)

*'How far is to London from here?' 'I couldn't say.'* (= ability)

#### 2 IN MY OPINION...

We use *should* and *ought to* to give our subjective opinion about whether we think something is possible or true (see Section 1.3 for *should* / *ought to* for predictions):

*I've fixed your video and it should / ought to be working all right now.*

- However, we use *should* and *ought to* more commonly to give our opinion about whether something is right or not (see Section 3.2):  
*That table shouldn't be here. It should be over there.*  
*There ought to be another packet of sugar in that cupboard.*

#### 3 DEDUCTION

When we give good reasons for thinking something is true or untrue, we use *must* and *can't* as opposites:

*He goes to Scotland every year for his holidays. He must like it.* (= I'm sure he does) *John can't possibly be seventy! He doesn't look a day over fifty.* (= I'm sure it isn't true)

- When we give reasons for making logical assumptions about the past, we use *must have* and *can't have*:

*You look very relaxed – it must have been a good holiday.* *Where's Dominic? He can't have left already, can he?*

- We can also use *couldn't* and *couldn't have*:  
*They couldn't be asking for me – no one knows I live here.* (= disbelief)  
*He couldn't have taken it by mistake, could he?* (= doubt)

#### 4 EXPRESSING ANNOYANCE

We can use *might have* and *could have* to express annoyance about something that happened:

*He could / might at least have offered to pay!* (= but he didn't)

#### ? check

Which one of these sentences does *not* illustrate one of the points above?

- He'll probably be getting off the plane now.
- They must be enjoying themselves; just listen.
- You could have done the car a lot of damage.
- He may well come along later.
- I think that socket should work now.

## Practice

**1** Tick (✓) the pairs of sentences that express approximately the same idea. Put a cross (X) by those where there is a clear difference in meaning.

Examples: x I may well have been a little bit late in arriving.

It's quite possible I was a little bit late. ✓

y We may not get there in time for the speeches.

We couldn't get there in time for the speeches. X

- a This could be the chance we've all been waiting for.  
This might be the chance we've all been waiting for.
- b This may very well be the last chance for peace.  
This might very well be the last chance for peace.
- c That's probably the postman dropping in the weekly free newspaper.  
That'll be the postman dropping in the weekly free newspaper.
- d They won't have read our fax yet.  
I doubt if they've read our fax yet.
- e The exam results should be here by now.  
The exam results should be here any day now.
- f They must have taken a short cut to get here.  
They had to take a short cut to get here.
- g You could have done yourself a nasty injury.  
You might have done yourself a nasty injury.
- h The washing machine shouldn't be making such a strange noise.  
The washing machine couldn't be making such a strange noise.

**2** Tick (✓) the modal verbs that complete each of the sentences in this passage. One, two or all of them may be possible.

There *shouldn't/might not/ought not* (1) be a comma before the 'who' in this sentence, Kostas. Oh yes, you *may well/might well/will well* (2) say that writing English is not important for you. But you *could/may/might* (3) have to write a dissertation in English one day. Punctuation and spelling *should/could/may* (4) be quite a serious problem for you. But it *can/should/could* (5) always be possible for you to get full-stops in the right place. And it *can't/shouldn't/mustn't* (6) be that difficult to spell most short words more or less correctly. You *may/must/might* (7) not have realised how flexible English is. For example, you *may/should/can* (8) find 'organisation' spelt with an 's' or a 'z'. It makes life easier, doesn't it?

**3** Combine each question and answer using *for* to make one sentence.

Examples: 'Was it a serious crime?' 'Well, the police have put quite a lot of men on the case.'

*It must have been quite a serious crime for the police to have put so many men on the case.*

'Does he work many hours?' 'I don't know, but I do know his wages are very low.'

*He can't work very many hours for his wages to be so low.*

- a 'Was very much stolen?' 'Well, the bank's offering a reward of £50,000.'
- b 'Was it an exciting match?' 'Well, half the spectators left at half-time.'
- c 'Is it a good show?' 'Well, people have travelled an awfully long way to see it.'
- d 'Is it a big school?' 'Well, there are over sixty teachers working there.'
- e 'Has something serious gone wrong?' 'Well, the boss is ranting and raving like a madman.'
- f 'Was it a major operation?' 'Well, they let her out of hospital the following day.'

**4** Fill each of the blanks with a suitable word or phrase.

Example: I think you *may* very well have put your finger on the problem there.

- a Our neighbours must ..... fortune on that new garden furniture of theirs.
- b It couldn't ..... you spoke to; I wasn't even in the country at the time.
- c It's well past dinner-time; surely the conference should ..... by now.
- d She can't ..... very well to have left the party so early.
- e I might ..... like this would happen.
- f You could ..... know beforehand that you couldn't come.

## SECTION 3

### Necessity, duty and advice

#### 1 NECESSITY

We use *must* and *mustn't* when we decide for ourselves what's necessary:

You **mustn't** keep asking for my help all the time. (= I don't want you to) I really **must** be going: it's getting late. (= I think I must)

- We can also use *must* and *mustn't* for impersonal necessity:  
The lead **must** be connected properly or it won't work.
- The strength of necessity varies with the situation:  
All questions **must** be answered. (= order) You **must** see the film – it's really good. (= advice) We **must** get together sometime and talk this over. (= suggestion)

#### have to

Although not a modal verb, we often use *have to* and *have got to* (more informal) before verbs to talk about necessity. *Have to* usually suggests that someone else decides what's necessary:

The notice says we **have to** report to the manager's office.

I've **got to** go or my boss will wonder where I am.

- Because *have to* isn't a modal, it has a past form, -ing form, infinitive form, etc. This means we can use it in more situations than *must*:  
We **had to** break in because we'd forgotten our key.  
They'll **have to** hurry if they're not going to be late.  
I don't like **having to** wear a suit and tie.  
He pretended **to have to** leave early.

#### 2 DUTY AND ADVICE

We use *should* and *ought to* to express our opinion about what's right and wrong:

Drivers **ought to** be more considerate to other road users. (= it's their duty) You **should** take this responsibility very seriously. (= it's your duty)

You really **shouldn't** be lifting heavy furniture at your age. (= strong advice / criticism)

- To talk about the past, we use *should have* and *ought to have*. They suggest what happened in the past was wrong or unfortunate:  
The Government **ought to have** listened. (= they didn't)  
You **shouldn't have** worked so hard. (= you did)
- We use *shall* as well as *should* and *ought to* to ask for advice:  
What **shall** I do? Do you think I **should** tell her?

#### 3 NOT NECESSARY

To say there is no obligation to do something we use *needn't*, *don't need to* or *don't have to*. In many instances there is little or no change in meaning, but:

- We generally use *needn't* when the authority comes from the speaker:  
You **needn't** come this evening if you don't want to.
- We generally use *don't need to* and *don't have to* when the authority doesn't come from the speaker:  
You **don't need to** / **don't have to** carry an identity card.
- To talk about the past, we use *needn't have* or *didn't need to* / *didn't have to*. *Needn't have* means 'you did, but it wasn't necessary':  
You **needn't have** cooked so much food.
- With *didn't need to* / *didn't have to* only the context tells us whether it actually happened:  
I **didn't need to** go shopping, but I did, just for fun.  
I **didn't have to** do any extra shopping, so I didn't.

#### 4 OTHER VERBS FOR EXPRESSING NECESSITY AND ADVICE

Other verbs express necessity or advice:

Hard hats **are to** be worn on this site. (= necessity)

All guests **will** vacate their room before 11 o'clock. (= necessity)

I **wouldn't** do that if I were you. (= advice)

You'd **better** phone home – they have news of your sister. (= advice)

- We use *had better* for advice in a particular situation. *Should* and *ought to* can be more general:  
~~✗ Employees **had better** give three months' notice.~~  
✓ Employees **should** give three months' notice.  
You'd **better** give in your notice if you plan to leave.

For other ways of expressing necessity, see Section 5.

#### ? check

Which one of these sentences does not contain the idea of necessity, duty or advice?

- You'd better have a good excuse or you're in trouble.
- This film should be really good: it's had great reviews.
- You must try harder than that if you're going to make the team.
- You should have got up earlier – then you wouldn't be late.
- We may have to give in to their demands.

## Practice

### 1 Tick (✓) the sentences below which express necessity, duty or advice.

*Example:* It must be hard work on an oil rig,  
mustn't it? ✗

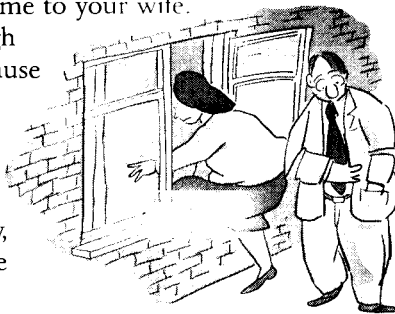
I must be on my way if you don't mind. ✓

- a The filler must be hard before you can paint over it.
- b You must be joking.
- c It must have been offside because the goal was disallowed.
- d Having to get up so early every morning is really getting me down.
- e A bike is sometimes worth having to beat traffic jams in towns.
- f Do you think I ought to give Dad a ring?
- g Should you have any problems with your computer, give me a call.
- h Doctors should respect their patients' wishes.
- i Are you saying we needn't have gone to all this trouble anyway?
- j He'd better not be late again!

### 2 Fill each of the gaps with *must* or a form of *have to* followed by a suitable verb.

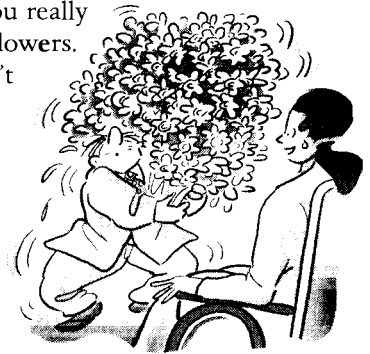
*Example:* I really dislike *having to go* shopping at the weekend.

- a Just recently I ..... down on my spending.
- b You really ..... me to your wife.
- c We ..... through the window because I had left my key inside.
- d One day everyone ..... at the age of fifty, whether they like it or not.
- e This exercise is so difficult one ..... a genius to do it.
- f I didn't take the job because I ..... 50 hours a week.
- g Come on, you ..... me drive you home.
- h You ..... at your desk at nine sharp or else part of your salary .....
- i You ..... for 26 weeks in the previous year to qualify for unemployment benefit.
- j I find I ..... longer and longer on my homework at the moment just to keep up.



### 3 Tick (✓) each of the sentences in which *didn't need to* can be replaced with *needn't have* + -ed.

- a It's sweet of you, but you really didn't need to buy me flowers.
- b It's a good job we didn't need to be here earlier.
- c It was strange that we didn't need to show our passports.
- d You didn't need to come and pick me up: I could have got a taxi.
- e There was a sofa in the other room: you didn't need to sleep on the floor.
- f I didn't need to use cash; I had my credit card with me after all.



### 4 Finish each of the following sentences in two different ways so that they are as similar in meaning as possible to the sentence printed before them.

*Example:* If I were you, I'd have the lobster.

- a I think you ought to *have the lobster*.
- b You really should *have the lobster*.

- 1 Why ever did you go to so much trouble with the refreshments?  
a You really needn't .....  
b It really .....
- 2 There is to be no talking whatsoever during the examination.  
a Candidates will not .....  
b Silence is to .....
- 3 I really must be going now.  
a I've absolutely .....  
b I really mustn't .....
- 4 She should take some form of identification with her, shouldn't she?  
a She'd .....  
b It might be .....
- 5 It may be possible for you to go there without a visa after all.  
a It may not .....  
b You might not .....
- 6 Don't you think it's time we made our excuses and left?  
a Hadn't .....?  
b Oughtn't .....?