

# MODAL VERBS

Can, Could, Must, Should,  
May, Might, Will, Would, Shall

## Can

Can is used to:

- A. ask for permission, in informal use.
  - Can I use your phone?
- B. show ability.
  - He can do a somersault.



## Could

Could is used as:

- A. a past tense of 'can'.
- B. a conditional.
  - I could help you if you help yourself.
- C. a possibility.
  - John is not in the office today, he could be sick.
- D. addition of a note of tentativeness or politeness.
  - Could you spare me 30 dollars, please?



## Exercise: Can, Could

*Fill in the blanks with can or could.*

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ swim when I was young.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ you pass me the salt? (when asking your peer)
3. This puppy has some problems and it \_\_\_\_\_ run fast.
4. My father \_\_\_\_\_ help you if you ask him.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ you please type this up for me? (a polite request)
6. Your dog \_\_\_\_\_ be in the park but I am not sure.

## Must

Must is used to:

- A. show obligation (something that you need to do)
  - You must hand in your homework to your teacher tomorrow.
- B. show certainty
  - You must be the father of Anson.

## Exercise: Can, Could, Must

Fill in the blanks with *can*, *could* or *must*.

1. Claris \_\_\_\_\_ play the violin well but she \_\_\_\_\_ do as well before.
2. You \_\_\_\_\_ hurry or you will miss the flight which departs on time.
3. Donating blood to the blood bank \_\_\_\_\_ save many lives.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I pay by credit card and still get the discount?
5. You \_\_\_\_\_ pack more than 30kg in one luggage as it's an airline requirement.

## Should

Should is used as:

- A. past tense of 'shall'.
- B. express a strong possibility.
  - We should have a great time in the party.
- C. express duty or responsibility.
  - You should finish all the homework before you watch TV.
- D. give advice or opinions
  - You should bring an umbrella as the sky is getting dark.



## Exercise: Should, Must

Fill in the blanks with *should* or *must*.

1. You \_\_\_\_\_ do more exercise if you want to stay healthy.
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ get a pass in this exam as this college doesn't take students who fail.
3. You \_\_\_\_\_ eat all the sushi I made. If you don't, I will be angry!
4. What \_\_\_\_\_ I do if I want to get a better mark in this English exam?
5. You promised to buy me an ice-cream. You \_\_\_\_\_ forget this.
6. I think you \_\_\_\_\_ try to arrive the box office a bit earlier to avoid disappointment.

# May

May is used to:

- A. ask for permission.
  - May I come in?
- B. express possibility.
  - Celine Dion may come to Hong Kong for her concert.
- C. request for things
  - May I use your pencil?



# Difference between May and Might

**MAY** express the chances of something being the case are likely.

**MIGHT** express really low possibility

# Might

Might is used as:

- A. past tense of 'may'.
- B. express possibility (difficult to achieve).
  - If he were more polite, he might be better liked.

# Exercise: May, Might

*Fill in the blanks with may or might.*

1. We \_\_\_\_\_ play cards tonight, even though I prefer to play Monopoly.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ I ask a question? –Yes, of course.
3. Where's my dress? It \_\_\_\_\_ be in my room.
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ become a teacher when I grow up because I love children.
5. I \_\_\_\_\_ become a pilot when I grow up, but I doubt it.

# Will

Will is used to:

- A. show a request.
  - Will you come to Japan with me?
  - Yes, I will.
- B. show certainty.
  - I will always tell the truth.
- C. describe an action in the future.
  - He won't turn up tonight.

# Would

Would is used:

- A. as past tense of 'will'.
- B. to convey the conditional mood.
  - If they wanted to do it, they would have done it by now.
- C. show an offer
  - Would you like a glass of water?

# Exercise: Will, Would

Fill in the blanks with *will* or *would*.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ the teacher give us a test today?
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ get a tan, if I worked at the pool.
3. I think I \_\_\_\_\_ go to the beach this Saturday.
4. I \_\_\_\_\_ buy new shoes, if I had more money.
5. I'm starving! I \_\_\_\_\_ order some pizza. Do you want some?

# Shall

Shall is used to:

- A. make a suggestion.
  - Shall we take a stroll?
- B. show an offer
  - Shall we dance?
- C. describe an action in the future
  - I shall travel to Japan next week.

## Mixed Exercise

*Fill in the blanks with can, could, must, should, may, might, will, would and shall*

1. You seem to be having trouble there. \_\_\_\_\_ I help you?
2. \_\_\_\_\_ you repeat the question, please?
3. I \_\_\_\_\_ get up early tomorrow because I have an interview.
4. We \_\_\_\_\_ watch the film tonight if you want to.
5. Please water my plants while I'm gone, otherwise they \_\_\_\_\_ die.

## Mixed Exercise

*Fill in the blanks with can, could, must, should, may, might, will, would and shall*

6. You \_\_\_\_\_ meet my best friend. She is lovely.
7. Take an umbrella. It \_\_\_\_\_ rain later.
8. I \_\_\_\_\_ speak French fluently when I was a child.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ you like to come with me to the party tonight?