

Modal Verbs



Modal Verbs are always followed by the infinitive without to.

MODAL VERBS	USE	EXAMPLES
CAN	ability request permission	She can run like no one else. Can I ask you a favour? You can come in now.
COULD	request ability	Could you call the nurse, please? When he was younger, he could dance for hours.
MAY	permission possibility	May I come in? He may be late tomorrow.
MIGHT	possibility	We might not wait for you.
MUST	necessity	I must leave now.
MUSTN'T	prohibition	You mustn't drive without a license.
SHOULD	advice moral obligation	She should see a doctor. We should respect nature.



1.

Choose the right modal verb for each situation.

- a) We should/ can/ may go home now. It's getting cold.
- b) May / Must / Might I start the game?
- c) Tim just shouldn't / couldn't / can't speak, he was so shocked.
- d) You mustn't / couldn't / mightn't smoke here.
- e) Tomorrow I can / might / should go to the beach, but I'm not sure.



2.

Fill in the blanks with the most suitable modal verb.

- a) When she was younger, she _____ run very fast.
- b) I _____ understand a word she's saying.
- c) The doctor told me I _____ in bed. It's essential, he said.
- d) You _____ smoke. It's not good for you.
- e) I don't know if I _____ do this exercise. It's rather difficult.
- f) You _____ never lie to your parents.



Replace the underlined expressions by a modal verb. Start as suggested.

3.

a) I'm not capable of speaking French.

I _____.

b) You have the obligation to report all incidents.

You _____.

c) My advice is that he follows his father into the medical profession.

He _____.

d) She has the ability to overcome her problems.

She _____.

e) It's possible that I come late tomorrow.

I _____.

f) It's forbidden to turn right on this road.

You _____.



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Answer key:

1. should; May; couldn't; mustn't; might

2. could; can't; must; shouldn't; can

3. I can't speak French; You must report all incidents; He should follow his father into medical profession; She could overcome her problems; I may come late tomorrow; You mustn't turn right on this road.