

1st Chapter : Modal Verbs**Initiations :**

- Different from ordinary verbs.
- Never used alone, always used with another ordinary verb.
- The meaning changes depending on the context.

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Different from ordinary verbs in the sense that : First, they don't take « to » in the infinitive. Secondly, they considered to be auxiliary verbs, so they take auxiliaries in the negative or interrogative forms.

These modal verbs are almost never used alone as they are always used with other verbs which they shape to give them different meanings.

There are many types of modal verbs with different uses and different meanings.

A – Can/Could**I – Can/Could for possibility :**1st Ex : My father says I *can use* his computer.

- « Can » here expresses possibility.

2nd ex : When you need me just phone, I *can come* any time.3th ex : She has nothing to do, she *can come* and help you tomorrow.

« Can » may be used to express possibility in the present and the futur.

« Could » Is used for possibility in the past.

Ex : I *could come* and visit you yesterday but you didn't call me.**II – Can/Could/Be able to... for Ability (Capability, physical or mental) :**Ex : I *can/am able to run* very fast.

To express ability in the futur « be able to » is used.

Ex : You *will be able to drive* after a few lessons.

« Be able to » can also be used in the present, but it is very rare, « can » is more usual.

In the past « could » is used to express ability, « was/were able to » is also possible, but there is a little difference.

1st ex : I *could* swim very fast when I was young

2nd ex : She *was able to* swim 2000m before she felt exhausted.

« Could » expresses ability in the past but we don't know if the action was performed or not.

« Was/Were able to » expresses ability in the past while we are sure that the action was performed.

III – Can/Could for permission :

« Can » may be used to ask for, give or refuse permission, in the present and in the futur (we can't ask for permission in the past you idiot !!)

1st ex : *Can I use* your phone ?

2nd ex : *Can I go out* ?

3th ex : You *can watch* television when you finish your homework.

4th ex : I am sorry, you *can't go out*.

« Could » is also used for permission in the present (in a polite way + very rare).It can also be used as the past of « can » to express permission in reported speeches.

Ex : She said you *could leave* when you finished your work.

« Could » cannot be used for permission in the past, It'll sound like a possibility.

« Be allowed to » can also be used to express permission, but it is always used in the passive, it expresses authority, and it is almost always used in the negative.

1st ex : I *am not allowed to stay* out after eleven o'clock.

2nd ex : You *are not allowed to smoke* here.

« Not to be allowed to » is generally used to express forbiddance, it can also express, in the past, an action which was permitted and performed in the past.

Ex : In the university, we *were allowed to borrow* books from the library and take them home.

IV – Can/Could for polite requests :

Ex : *Can I have* a glass of water please ?

This a polite request, « can » is a very useful way to ask for things in a polite way.

« Could » can be used too, and it's considered more polite and formal than can.

Ex : *Could* you please *send* me an application form ?

« Could » can also be used as the past of « can » in reported speech.

Ex : - *Can I have* a glass of water ?

- She asked if she *could have* a glass of water.

« Can » and « Could » can also be used to offer some service, and « could » of course is more formal and more polite than « can ».

1st ex : *Can* I help you ?

2nd ex : *Could* I get you something to drink ?

B – May/Might

I – May/Might for probability :

« May » and « Might » can be used to talk about actions of which we are not sure.

Ex : It *may* rain this lanternon.

« Might » makes the possibility more unlikely (less probable)

« Might » is used as the past of may in reported speech.

Ex : He said *he might* phone me.

« May » not « Might » can be used to express concession.

Ex : She *may be* very young but she can speak and behave like an adult.

II – May/Might to ask for permission :

« May » can be used to ask for permission in the same way as « can » and « could », still it's considered to be more polite.

« Might » is also possible, but it is extremely formal/polite, therefore, it is very rare.

C – Must/Have to...

I – Must/Have to... for obligation :

Both « must » and « have to » can be used to express obligation.

On one hand, « must » is considered to be a strong one as it expresses the speaker's orders.

Ex : You *must come* early tomorrow (I want you to come early tomorrow, these are my orders)

On the other hand, « have to » expresses an obligation issued not by the speaker but by some external authority, the speaker here is simply passing on the message.

Ex : You *have to take* an exam next week (this is a rule that is issued by the university)

Note that :

→First, this difference is even clearer with first persons (I and We).

1st ex : I don't feel well, I *must see* a doctor.

2nd ex : I feel dirty, I *must have* a bath.

3th ex : I *have to go* to work.

4th ex : I *have to pay* the bill before Friday.

→Second, « must » doesn't change, while « have to » does .

« Must » doesn't have a futur or a past form, whereas « have to » have both.

1st ex : You *will have to start* working early tomorrow.

2nd ex : They *had to write* a long essay.

Another form to express obligation is « have got to », but it is used to express immediate obligation or an obligation which is due very soon.

1st ex : I'm leaving now, I've *got to catch* a bus .

2nd ex : I'm going to bed, I've *got to get up* early tomorrow.

II – « Mustn't » for negative obligation :

→ « Mustn't » is the negative form of « must », but only in the form.

« Mustn't » Is used to express negative obligation, which means that there is obligation, but it is negative. So, with « must » the obligation is +, while with « mustn't » it is -.

With both, the obligation exists, and we have no choice.

ex : You mustn't drink coffee. (meaning that you are obliged not to drink it)

D – Needn't/Don't have to... for no obligation

In order to express absence of obligation, we can use « needn't » or « don't have to ».

Ex : It isn't very far, we *needn't take* a taxi (or : ...we don't have to take a taxi)

« Needn't » does not change whereas « don't have to » does depending on the subject and the tense.

Both « needn't » and « don't have to » can be used for the present and the future, but « won't have to » is possible, with a slight change in meaning.

1st ex : I *don't have to go* to work tomorrow. (It's something that happens every week/day..., a habit)

2nd ex : I *won't have to go* to work tomorrow. (this is an exception, because normally I have to work on that day)

In the past, « needn't » can have two forms : « needn't (not) » or « didn't need to »

ex : I *needn't* (or : *didn't need to*) rake my car last week.

The form with « didn't » is more usual, but the first one is also correct, and considered to be more formal.

The past of « don't have to » is « didn't have to »

ex : We *didn't have to* pay to see the exhibition, it was for free.

The interrogative form :

- Present S. :

1st ex : *Need* you go ? (or : *do you need to go* ?)

2nd ex : *Do* you *have to go* ?

-Past S. :

1st ex : *Needed* you go ? (or : *did you need to go* ?)

2nd ex : *Did* you *have to go* ?

E – Should/Ought to...

I – « Should » for moral Obligation :

« Should » can be used to express mild obligation, it is not an obligation that concerns laws rules or authority, it is rather a moral obligation.

1st ex : you *should obey* you parents.

2nd ex : you *should be* kind to old people.

3th ex : you *shouldn't drink* alcohol.

II – Should/Ought to... for advice and suggestions :

« Should » is often used to advise or suggest, and these are its most frequent uses.

1st ex : you *should stop* smoking, because you caught a lot. (advice)

2nd ex : it's a nice day, we *should go* for a ride. (suggestion)

3th ex : the exam is near, I think you *should start* your revision.

« Ought to » has exactly the same meaning and use as « should », there is a little difference in form.

Ex : you *should start* your revision.

you *ought to start* your revision.

Similarly in the negative form :

Ex : you *shouldn't play* football in the street.

you *oughtn't to play* football in the street.

But « should » is more usual, as it is considered to be more informal and also because it can be used not only to give advice, but also to ask for it.

1st ex : *should I go* now ?

2nd ex : what *should I say* if they ask me about you ?

F – Used to/Dare

« Used to » is an expression that is used for discontinued habits, which means habits that were in the past, but have stopped in the present.

Ex : I *used to* like coffee, but now I don't like it anymore.

« Used to » doesn't change, which means it has the same form for all subjects.

The negative form includes two ways :

- Usedn't to (or used not to)

- Didn't use to

Ex : I *didn't use to smoke*, but now I do.

The interrogative form :

- Used you to... ?

- Did you use to... ?

Ex : Did you *use to go* fishing when lived near the sea ?

In the negative form the form with « did » is more common, as the one with « used » is considered to be very formal.

« To dare » is an ordinary regular verb which means « to challenge »

Ex : - Why did you try to climb that high wall ?
- Because my friends *dared* me *to do* it ?

But « dare » can be used as a modal verb in the following cases :

I – « How dare you ? » :

It is an expression used for indignation (excessive anger), that's to say for immoral actions or actions that we think should not be done.

Ex : *How dare you* insulte your father ?!

II – When hesitating :

« Dare » can be used for actions that require courage and it's generally used in the negative.

Ex : I *daren't* ask my parents for money again.

The past forms are :

- Daredn't to (Dared not to)
- Didn't dare.

« Daredn't » is the most common as the form with « did » isn't considered to be a modal.

Ex : He *daren't* face his father after his catastrophic exam result.

III – In the expression « I dare say » :

It is used in the expression « I dare say » which means I accept what you say but it doesn't change anything.

Ex : - Customs officer : I *dare say* that watch was given to you as a present, but you have to pay duty for it all the same.

G – Modals used for deduction

I – Must/Could/Might/Should for positive Deduction :

- 1st ex : He doesn't work today, he *must be* at home (I'm nearly sure that he is at home)
2nd ex : They generally go out on Sunday morning, they *could be* in the park (that's a possibility)
3th ex : - How do you know they are English ? they *might be* Irish or they *might be* Austrilian. (Many possibilities)

« Must », « could » and « might » followed by « be » are very common to express positive deduction in the present, it is very rare that we use other verbs, because with other verbs the meaning could be different.

« Sould » is also possible as an alternative to « must »

Ex : They left here 5 hours ago, they *should be* in Marrakesh right now.

When the deduction concerns an action in progress in present, « must be », « could be » or « might be » may be used with the « ing » form.

- 1st ex : He has been in the bathroom for some time now, he *must be having* a shower.
2nd ex : She's in the kitchen, she *might be making* a cup of coffee.

To express positive deduction about the past, « must », « could », « might » are used with « have » then the past participle of any verb.

1st ex : he has a problem with his car, he *must have taken* it to a garage.

2nd ex : She isn't at home, she *must have gone* shopping.

3th ex : They didn't answer my phone call, they *might have gone* to sleep.

When the deduction concerns an action in progress in the past, « must », « could » or « might » are used with « have been » then the « ing » form of any verb.

1st ex : They didn't answer the phone, they *might have been sleeping*.

2nd ex : when I spoke to her on the phone she was in the library. She *must have been preparing* for her exams

II – Can't/Couldn't for negative deduction :

« Can't be » or « couldn't be » can be used to express negative deduction in the present.

1st ex : He *can't be* in class, it's still too early.

2nd ex : She *can't be* a teacher, I saw her coming out of the lawiers affice the last day.

When the deduction concerns an action in progress in the present we can use « can't be » or « couldn't be » with any verb in the « ing » form

Ex : He *can't be cooking*, he doesn't know how to.

For negative deduction about the past, we use « can't » or « couldn't » with « have » then the past participle of any verb.

Ex : You *can't have seen* me at that party last week, I was away on business at that moment.

When the deduction concerns an action in progress in the past, we use « can't » or « couldn't » with « have been » then any verb in the « ing » form.

Ex : He *can't have been working* on the computer, he doesn't have one.

H – Sould/Shouldn't have for performed/unperformed action

« Should have » with the past participle of any verb are used for actions that are necessary, but were not performed.

1st ex : I'm not surprised you missed your train, you *should have gone* to the station earlier.

2nd ex : They *should've told* me that they needed help.

« Shouldn't have » with the past participle of any verb is used for actions which were not necessary, but were performed.

Ex : You *shouldn't have told* about your problem, you know she can't keep a secret.