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Assunto: Modal Verbs



Resumo Teórico

Overview of Modal Verbs in English

(from Lange, Janet and Ellen Lange, 1999. Writing clearly: An editing guide, Heinle and Heinle, Massachusetts.)

Modal	Function	Form in the Present	Form in the Past
Can	To show ability	l can run 10 miles.	I could run 10 miles when I was young.
	To suggest a possibility or give an option	Students can pre-enroll in classes.	
	To ask for or to give permission	Can you call me? You can leave now.	
	To show impossibility	It cannot be Jim standing there. He went away for the weekend.	
Could	To show past ability		I could run 10 miles when I was young.
	To ask a polite question	Could I call you?	
	To show possibility	Why isn't Mary here? she coud be busy.	Why wasn't Mary at the party last night? She could have been busy.
	To show impossibility	He could not be here at the party. He is out of town.	He could not have been at the party last night. He was out of town.
	To suggest a possibility / opportunity or give an opition	You could try going this way.	You could have tried going that way.

May	To ask for or to give permission (formal)	May I call you?		
	To show possibility	The instructor may come to class late today.	The instructor may have come to class late yesterday.	
Might	To show possibility	The instructor might come to class late today.	The instructor might have come to class late yesterday.	
Should	To show advisability	You should try the new restaurant downtown.	You should have tried the new restaurant downtown.	
	To show obligation	l should renew my driver's license.	I should have renewed my driver's license.	
	To show expectation	You should receive my letter in two days.	You should have received my letter in two days.	
Ought to	To show advisability	You ought to exercise regularly.	You ought to have exercised regularly.	
	To show obligation	l ought to register to vote.	I ought to have reistered to vote by October.	
	To show expectation	You ought to receive my letter in two days.	You ought to have received my letter two days ago.	
Had better	To show advisability	We had better leave. It is getting late.		
Must	To show probability or to make a logical assumption	Janice must be out this evening. She does not answer the telephone.	Janice must have been out last evening. She did not answer her telephone.	
	To show necessity	I must call my parent tonight.	I was late for the meeting because I had to call my parents last night.	
	To show prohibition	You must not cross the street on red light.		
Have to	To show necessity	Mike has to make up the class he missed.	Mike hed to make up the classa he had missed.	
	To show lack of necessity	I am glad that I do not have to cook tonight.	l did not have to cook last night.	



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Will	To indicate future time	He will leave for the plane at 7 am.	
	To make a promises or to show willingness	The federal government will provide assistance to the hurricane victims.	
	To state a general truth	The new car they have developed will run on either gasoline or ethanol.	
	To ask a polite question	Will you help me with these boxes?	
Would	To ask apolite question	Wold you help me with these boxes?	
	To indicate a repeated action in the past		When I lived in LA, I would go to the beach every day.,
	To indicate future time in the sentence that is in the past		Mark promised that he would help me with my math homework.
Would rather	To show a preference	I would rather go to summer school than graduate late.	
Would like	To express a desire	I woud like to go medical school.	I would have liked go to medical school.

Modal Verbs

Modal auxiliaries generally express a speaker's attitudes, or "moods." For example, modals can express that a speaker feels something is necessary, advisable, possible, or probable; and, in addition, they can convey the strength of these attitudes.

Ex.: John *must cut* down on sugar. His health is not quite good.

May I see you after class, Professor Chamberlain?

I guess you *should talk* to your wife about that. She will understand.

Modal verbs do not take a final ${\boldsymbol{\mathsf{s}}}$ when the subject is he, she or it.

Ex.: She can dance very well.

The cat could eat the whole steak.

It may rain at any moment today.

Modal verbs must be followed immediately by the bare infinitive of a verb.

Ex.: They should spend less money on silly things.

Politicians must defend their voters' wishes.

Kids cannot walk in the park by themselves.

Modal verbs form interrogative and negative structures without using any kind of auxiliary verb. The modal verbs themselves function as auxiliary verbs.

Ex.: Can I stay here with you?

May we save time to try it later? They mustn't stay up until late. We sometimes use expressions such as be able to, be allowed to and have to instead of modal verbs. These expressions give us certain meanings and forms which are not possible with modal verbs.

Ex.: I'd like to be able to run as fast as Usain Bolt.

My sister *has been allowed to visit* that old palace in Denmark. The children *will have to fill* in a form before the trip to the forest.

When we talk about the past, we can use modal verb + have + past participle. We use this structure, for example, to talk about things that possibly happened or things that did not happen.

- **Ex.:** Brian is late. He may have taken the wrong bus again.
 - I feel awful today. I shouldn't have eaten so much last night.
 - I doubt they did it. They can't have done such a thing.

We can use *could* to say that someone had the general ability to do something in the past. But when we want to say that someone had the ability to do something, and that they did it in a particular situation, we must use *was/were able to* (could is not possible).

Ex.: *I could I was able to run* really fast when I was 15 years old. Even though I'd hurt my arm, I was able to swim back to the boat. The teacher wasn't in school for very long, but the students were able to speak to her for a few minutes.

We use *can*, *could* and *may* to ask for permission. *Could* is less direct and more polite than *can* here. *May* is more formal (and some people regard it as more 'correct') than *can* or *could*, but *can* and *could* are more common. We can also use might to ask for permission in a less direct, much more formal style.

Ex.: Can I borrow you phone for a while?

Could I ask you something personal?

May I give a suggestion for the party?

When giving permission, we use can or may, but not could or might.

Ex.: Can I use your pencil for a moment? ~ Yes, of course you can. You can borrow my car if you wish to.

Could I make a suggestion? ~ Of course you may.

We use both *must* and *have to* to express obligation or necessity, but there is sometimes a difference between them: We generally use *must* when the authority comes from the speaker; we normally use *have to* when the authority comes from outside the speaker.

Ex.: You *must be* home before midnight.

I've had terrible headaches this week. I *must see* a doctor as soon as possible.

I have to be home before midnight. My father insists.

I have to go and see a doctor at 10.00 tomorrow morning. I have got an appointment.

We use *may*, *might* and *could* to talk about present or future possibility. *Might* is normally a little less sure than may. *Could* is normally less sure than *may* or *might*.

Ex.: There's someone outside. It *may* be Morgan.

We aren't sure what course we will take in college. We *might take* engineering.

Where's mom? ~ She *could be* in the kitchen. I don't know really. We use *can* to talk about 'theoretical possibility'.

Ex.: Anyone can learn how to drive.

It can be cold in São Paulo.

Sun rays can damage people's skin.

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Exercícios

- **01.** Choose the correct word or phrase in each sentence.
 - A) Look at those clouds. I think it can / might / must rain.
 - B) This is impossible! It can't be / mustn't be / may not be the answer.
 - C) God job! You may be / must be / might be pleased.
 - D) I have no idea where Jane is. She could be / must be anywhere.
 - E) I suppose it's possible. I might / can / must get the job.
 - F) I'm not sure. I must not / may not be able to get there in time.
 - G) That *can't be / mustn't be / may not be* David. He doesn't have a bike.
 - H) Lisa isn't here yet. She can be / must be on her way.
 - I) There's someone at the door. It can be / could be a delivery.
 - J) Sorry, I can't I may not go out. I have to do my homework.
- **02.** Escolha a alternativa que responde corretamente à pergunta "What happened to the bridge?"

A) Oh! We should have blew up it!

- B) Oh! We should blown it up!
- C) Oh! We should to have blown up it!
- D) Oh! We should have blown it up!
- E) Oh! We should had blown up it!
- **03.** Qual destas expressões corresponde a "Ele não deveria ter feito isso":
 - A) He mustn't have made it.
 - B) He shouldn't have done that.
 - C) He could not have made it.
 - D) He might not have done that.
 - E) He cannot have done that.
- 04. Qual a forma correta?
 - A) The mail must go on whether there are a hundred storms.
 - B) The mail can go on whether there are a hundred storms.
 - C) The mail should go on when there are a hundred storms.
 - D) The mail must go on if there are a hundred storms.
 - E) The mail is going on if there are a hundred storms.
- **05.** Assinale a alternativa que traduz melhor a seguinte sentença:
 - "I can't tell one from the other."
 - A) Não distingo uma da outra.
 - B) Não conto com nenhuma outra.
 - C) Não falo com nenhuma outra.
 - D) Não posso falar de uma para outra.
 - E) Não posso dizer para a outra.

06. Assinale a alternativa correta:

"He _____ avoid _____ mistakes." A) ought – making B) must – make C) shall – make D) needs – make E) should – making **07.** Assinale a letra correspondente à alternativa que preenche corretamente as lacunas da frase apresentada:

Janet: Look, our boat is sinking!

Peter: Oh, dear! Can you swim?

Janet: Yes, but we won't have to, there's a life boat on board.

In the above dialogue, the verbs "can" and "have to" express respectively ______ and _____.

- A) ability obligation
- B) permission prohibition
- C) possibility prohibition
- D) permission possibility
- E) ability necessity
- **08.** Assinale a alternativa que preenche corretamente a lacuna da frase apresentada:
 - Excuse me, sir. _____ you tell me the time?
 - Sure, it's 5:20.
 - A) May
 - B) Do
 - C) Can
 - D) Have
 - E) Shall
- **09.** Assinale a alternativa correta:

"We _____ hurry. The bus leaves in 10 minutes."

- A) can
- B) must
- C) do
- D) did
- E) would
- **10.** Assinale a letra correspondente à alternativa que preenche corretamente a lacuna da frase apresentada:
 - Bob, ______ you do me a real favor?
 - Yes, of course.
 - A) may
 - B) could
 - C) must
 - D) ought
 - E) should
- **11.** Assinale a alternativa que preenche
 - corretamente a lacuna da frase abaixo:

"Could I ______ earlier tomorrow?"

- A) to leave
- B) leave
- C) leaves
- D) left
- E) leaving
- **12.** Assinale a alternativa que preenche
 - corretamente a lacuna da frase abaixo:
 - " This place is not good. _____ we go elsewhere?" A) Will B) Will not C) Ought
 - D) Shall E) Let's



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13. The word *can* in the text below expresses:

"Loneliness itself is hard to define. People aren't always lonely when they're alone, but they can feel lonely when surrounded by other people."

- A) obligation.
- B) necessity.
- C) permission.
- D) possibility.
- E) intention.

14 Assinale a alternativa correta:

- Do I have to do it again?
- Yes, you _____.

A) had

- B) would
- C) must
- D) did
- E) were

15 Mark the correct option:

"I'm sorry the train was late and I ______ arrive earlier"

- A) couldn't
- B) ought not
- C) don't
- D) mustn't
- E) wouldn't

Gabarito

01	02	03	04	05
_	D	В	А	А
06	07	08	09	10
E	E	С	В	В
11	12	13	14	15
В	D	D	С	А

- Demonstração.



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