

FRENTE: INGLÊS

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ASSUNTO: MODAL VERBS

EAD – ITA/IME

AULA 20



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	I 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 could 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 option	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	I 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	I ought to register to vote.	I ought to have registered 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 had to make up the class he had missed.
	To show lack of necessity	I am glad that I do not have to cook tonight.	I did not have to cook last night.

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 a polite question	Would 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 would like to go to medical school.	I would have liked to 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 **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 / 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* your 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.

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	B	A	A
06	07	08	09	10
E	E	C	B	B
11	12	13	14	15
B	D	D	C	A

– Demonstração.



Anotações

