

MODAL VERBS

GENERAL RULES

1. They cannot function as MAIN verbs in a sentence. They always need another verb.
2. The verb that follows them will do it in its BASE FORM without “to”.
3. They DO NOT add the third person’s “S” in the present simple tense.
4. You DO NOT use “DON’T”; just use NOT.
5. DO NOT use two modal verbs together. REMEMBER! They cannot function as MAIN VERBS!

SHOULD/SHOULDN’T

FORMATION (BLACKBOARD)

USES:

1. *GIVE ADVICE TALK ABOUT DUTY*
Example: You should call your parents.
2. *TALK ABOUT DUTY*
Example: Tina is in hospital. We should visit her.

MUST/MUSTN’T

FORMATION (BLACKBOARD)

USES:

1. *RULES AND OBLIGATION*
Examples: You must compromise sometimes.
She mustn’t lie to her parents (it’s considered a “rule” because it’s not right to do it)
2. *PROHIBITION*
Example: They mustn’t use their laptops here.
3. *NEED TO DO SOMETHING*
Examples: We must accept the situation.
Must we tell Sally about the party? (however, it’s not common to use “must” in interrogative sentences)
4. *EXPRESS CERTAINTY – when we are sure something is true*
Example: This must be Jim’s brother. He looks just like him.

HAVE TO/DON’T HAVE TO (this is a special “modal verb”! It doesn’t follow modal verb rules!)

FORMATION (BLACKBOARD)

USES:

1. *RULES AND OBLIGATION*
Examples: We have to send her an email right now.
Do you have to do a test tomorrow?
2. *NEED TO DO SOMETHING*
Example: She had to help her friend yesterday.

BUT: DON’T HAVE TO: LACK OF OBLIGATION (NO OBLIGATION)

Example: You don’t have to buy her a present.

NEED TO/DON’T NEED TO or NEEDN’T

FORMATION (BLACKBOARD)

USES:

1. *RULES AND OBLIGATION*

Example: We need to return this immediately.

2. *NEED TO DO SOMETHING*

Example: Do you need to go now?

BUT: DON'T NEED TO/NEEDN'T: LACK OF OBLIGATION (NO OBLIGATION)

Example: You don't need to/needn't do this

CAN/CAN'T

FORMATION (BLACKBOARD)

USES:

1. *ABILITY TO DO SOMETHING*

Lisa can swim very well

2. *POSSIBILITY*

You can try this

3. *PERMISSION*

They can go out tonight

4. *MAKE REQUESTS*

Can you open the door, please?

BUT: CAN'T:

1. *LACK OF ABILITY (NO ABILITY)*

I cannot/can't play the piano

5. *NEGATIVE CERTAINTY*

It can't be true (I'm sure it is NOT true)

COULD/COULDN'T

FORMATION (BLACKBOARD)

USES:

1. *ABILITY IN THE PAST*

Robert could talk when he was one year old.

2. *POSSIBILITY*

Someone's at the door. It could be Mark.

3. *POLITE REQUESTS*

Could you take me home, please?

BUT: COULDN'T: LACK OF ABILITY IN THE PAST (NO ABILITY)

He couldn't swim when he was young.

BE ABLE TO

- IT'S LIKE "CAN". HOWEVER, "CAN" CAN ONLY BE USED IN THE PRESENT TENSE, WHILE "BE ABLE TO" CAN BE USED IN ANY TENSE; WE JUST NEED TO CONJUGATE THE VERB "TO BE".

FORMATION (BLACKBOARD)

USES:

1. *ABILITY*

I was able to skate when I was little.

2. *POSSIBILITY/LACK OF POSSIBILITY*

I won't be able to get ready in one hour.

Are you able to lose weight with the diet?

MAY/MIGHT

- “MAY” AND “MIGHT” ARE VERY SIMILAR, BUT THERE IS A SLIGHT DIFFERENCE IN MEANING. THEY BOTH EXPRESS POSSIBILITY IN THE FUTURE, BUT “MIGHT” INDICATES THAT THE POSSIBILITY IS MORE REMOTE. “MAY” INDICATES A STRONGER POSSIBILITY.

FORMATION (BLACKBOARD)

USE:

1. *FUTURE POSSIBILITY*
I may/might reach my destination today.

ALSO:

“MAY”:

1. *EXPRESS PERMISSION IN FORMAL SPEECH*
You may use my camera, but don't break it.
She may/might not come today
2. *Only asking for permission, not to express possibility in INTERROGATIVE SENTENCES*
May I use your pencil?

***REVIEW: how to do short answers with modal verbs. BLACKBOARD.**

***KNOWING WHEN TO USE EACH MODAL VERB**

CAN'T vs. MUSTN'T

Can't tells us that something is against the rules. **Mustn't** is usually used when the obligation comes from the person who is speaking.

HAVE TO vs. MUST

Have to and **must** are both used to express obligation. There is a slight difference between the way they are used.

Have to shows us that the obligation comes from somebody else. It's a law or a rule and the speaker can't change it. **Must** shows us that the obligation comes from the speaker. It isn't a law or a rule.

MAY vs. MIGHT

Weaker – stronger possibility.