

# **Grammar Reference: Modal Verbs**

**Can I go to  
the toilet?**



**You should  
stop smoking!**



If you want a healthier life, you **must** change your habits.



Modal Verbs are a type of auxiliary verb.

They are also called auxiliary verbs and are used with the main verb to form a statement or question.

After the modal verbs we always use the infinitive.



Some MODAL VERBS in English are:

CAN

COULD

MUST

MA

SHOULD

Y  
MIGHT



# CAN

Indicates POSSIBILITY or ABILITY.

Drinking too much alcohol **can** be dangerous to your health.

I **can** speak four languages fluently.

In questions, CAN asks for permission or about possibilities.

**Can** I go to the toilet?

Who **can** help me with my homework?



# COULD

Indicates POSSIBILITY or ABILITY in the PAST.

The accident **could** have killed you.

When I was a child, I **couldn't** play soccer very well.

COULD is also used to state hypothesis and make speculation.

If I had time, I **could** spend more time with my family.

In this case, he **could** be the victim.



# MUST

Indicates an OBLIGATION or PROHIBITION.

You **must** turn off your phones inside the classroom.

You **mustn't** smoke inside this building.

MUST is used to say that we are sure something is true.

You live downtown, right? Your house **must** be very noisy.

He **must** be very rich! Look at his expensive car.



# MAY & MIGHT

Indicate an UNCERTAIN ACTION.

I don't know where he is. He **may (might)** be in his office.  
The shop **may (might)** give us a discount in the next purchase.

MAY can also be used to ask for permission in formal situations.

**May** I drink some water?  
**May** I have another slice of pizza?



# SHOULD

Indicate suggestion or recommendation.

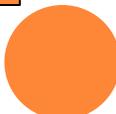
You **should** eat less if you want to lose weight.

You **should** study more. Your grades are not good.

SHOULD is also used to say what is correct in a situation or refer to **an** uncertain prediction.

The Police **should** arrest that man soon.

The price of the gas **should** increase in the next weeks.



# AND YOU?

What couldn't you do when you were a child that you can do now?

In order to have a healthier life, what should you do less or more?

List some of the things you must and you mustn't do in your classroom.

