

MODAL VERBS

We use modal verbs to express:

ABILITY - CAPABILITY

I **can** swim.

I **could** swim when I was five.

PERMISSION

You **can** go to the cinema.

In the evenings we **could** watch TV.

SUGGESTION

You **could** give Mary some flowers.

Shall we buy her a hat?

a REQUEST

Can I go to the cinema tonight?

Could you lend me £5, please?

May I leave the room?

Would you please close the door?

POSSIBILITY

Measles **can** be quite dangerous.

This vase **could** be very valuable.

He **may** be waiting for us at the airport.

John **might** come to your party.

Would John come with us if we asked him?

DEDUCTION-ASSUMPTION

It **couldn't** have been John because he's in London.

He drives a Ferrari. He **must** be rich.

SPECULATION

He **may** have gone to Spain with Mary.

Someone **might** have already told his father.

What **would** I have done without you?

Where **shall/will** we be this time next year?

PROHIBITION

You **mustn't** eat any more chocolate.

You **should** never repeat what you have just said.

OBLIGATION

You **must** / **have to** study harder!

I **should** be studying but I'm too tired.

NECESSITY

We **must** buy some more vegetables.

Semi-modals (have to/need to) are often preferred. NOT NECESSARY uses don't have to or don't need to/needn't

We don't need to buy any more vegetables. (It isn't necessary)

ADVICE

You **should** go to the doctor's tomorrow.

You **must** go to the doctor's tomorrow! (emphatic advice)

Semi-modals and other forms are often used. However, they sometimes change the level of intensity of the advice given.

You ought to/had better/have to/

If I were you I **would** go to the doctor's.