

Modals and associated verbs

| VERB | USE | EXAMPLE |
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| BE ABLE TO | Ability / Capability (past, present, future) | After the operation John was able to walk again. (single past occasion) I'm able to play tennis twice a week. (circumstances permit me to do this) I will be able to visit Paris next year. (nothing should prevent me from doing this) |
| MANAGE TO | Ability / Capable of doing something with a degree of difficulty (past, present, future) | I managed to get two tickets for the concert. (a degree of difficulty was involved) I manage to play tennis twice a week. I hope you will manage to come. (even though you may encounter difficulty in doing this) |
| CAN | Ability / Capability (present) | I can swim. |
| | Permission | You can go to the cinema. |
| | Possibility | Smoking can cause cancer. |
| | Request | Can I have a biscuit, please? |
| | Offer | Can I help you, madam? |
| | Negative deduction (present) | You can't be hungry, you have just eaten two pizzas. |
| | Prohibition | You can never tell anyone. |
| COULD | Ability / Capability (past) | I could swim when I was seven. |

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| | Permission | We could go to the cinema once a week. |
| | Possibility | This vase could be very valuable. |
| | Request | Could I use your phone, please? |
| | Offer | Could I be of any help? |
| | Suggestion | You could buy Mary some flowers. |
| | Negative deduction (past) | It couldn't have been John because he has an alibi. |
| MAY | Permission | You may leave the room. |
| | Possibility | He may be waiting for us when we arrive. |
| | Request | May I use your phone, please? (formal request) |
| | Offer | May I help you, sir? |
| | Prohibition | You may not use this computer. |
| | Speculation | John may have gone to Spain. |
| MIGHT | Possibility | John might come to your party. |
| | Speculation | Someone might have already told his wife. |
| | Suggestion | You might not want to drink this because it's very bitter. |
| | Conditional | If you invite him he might come. If you had invited him he might have come to your party. |

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| MUST | Deduction | He failed the exam. He must be disappointed |
| | Necessity | To overcome these difficulties we must all work together. |
| | Obligation | John must work harder if he wants to pass this exam. (subjective obligation) All expenses must be approved by the manager. |
| | Prohibition | You mustn't use this computer. (emphatic) |
| | Emphatic advice | You must see this film, it's great. |
| HAVE TO | Obligation | You have to stop when the traffic light is red. (imposed obligation) |
| | Negative: Not necessary and not done | I don't have to go to work tomorrow. I didn't have to water the flowers yesterday because it rained. |
| NEED | Necessity | Do you think I need to take an umbrella? |
| | Negative | You needn't water the flowers as John will be back tomorrow. (not necessary) I needn't have watered the flowers because it rained in the afternoon. (done but not necessary) |

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| OUGHT TO | Deduction | He has studied very hard, he ought to pass the exam. |
| | Assumption | He ought to have received the parcel by now. |
| | Advice | You ought to go to the doctor's. You ought not smoke so much. |
| | Recommendation | You ought to tell him the truth. |
| HAD BETTER | Advice | You had better take those wet clothes off. |
| | Recommendation | You had better tell me the truth. |
| SHOULD | Assumption / deduction | The plane should be landing now. |
| | Advice | You should go to the doctor's. |
| | Recommendation | You should take one of these pills every day. |
| | Necessity | You should be wearing a coat, it's very cold. |
| | Obligation | I should be studying but I'm too tired. |
| | Prediction | This should be a very good film. |
| | Prohibition | You should never repeat what you've just said. |

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| SHALL | Speculation | Where shall/will we be this time next year? |
| | Suggestion | Shall we invite John or not? |
| | Decision | I shall/will marry John even without your permission. |
| | Future | We shall overcome. |
| | Question | What shall we do? |
| | Offer | Shall we pick you up at 7.00? |
| WILL | Assumption | He will have plenty of time to get to the airport. |
| | Deduction | He left home an hour ago. He'll arrive any minute now. |
| | Future | He will be 27 next month. |
| | Offer | I'll do the shopping. |
| | Promise | I will marry you. |
| | Intention | I will wait for you. |
| | Obligation / decision | You WILL go to school whether you want to or not. |
| | Prediction | It will rain in Rome tomorrow. |
| | Conditional | If it rains tomorrow I will/won't go to the cinema. |

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| WOULD | Possibility | Would John come with us? |
| | Request | Would you please answer the question? |
| | Speculation | What would I have done without you? |
| | Polite question | Would you, please, close the door? |
| | Offer | Would you like a cup of tea? |
| | Past tense 'will' (indirect speech) | John said he would take me to the cinema. |
| | Customary past action | She would take the dog for a walk every morning before going to work. |
| | Invitation | Would you like to come with us? |
| | Preference | I would rather have a cup of coffee. |
| | Conditional | If I were you I would leave. If I had known you wanted to go to the concert I would have bought you a ticket. |