

# Introduction to modal verbs

## Introduction

Some facts about modal auxiliary verbs:

1. They do not have an infinitive form.

**can** ✓  
**to can** ✗

2. We use them before other verbs to give more information. We use the **bare infinitive** of the main verb. We do not use 'to' after a modal.

I **can** swim. ✓  
I **can** to swim. ✗

3. We use 'not' for the negative form

I **can't** swim. ✓  
I don't **can** swim. ✗

and we do not use 'do' in questions.

**Can** you swim? ✓  
Do you **can** swim? ✗

4. Modals have only one form.

I **can**  
You **can**  
He/she/it **can**  
We **can**  
They **can**

## A list of modal auxiliary verbs

Can  
Could  
May

**Might**  
**Must**  
**Shall**  
**Should**  
**Will**  
**Would**

## Uses

Modal auxiliary verbs have different meanings. This table shows some common uses.

See the rules on each modal for more detailed information.

	can	can't	could	may	might	must	mustn't	have to	will	would	shall	should	ought to
ability	x	x	x										
advice						x	x	x				x	x
deduction		x				x		x	x			x	x
expectation												x	x
habit									x	x			
hypothetical										x			
necessity						x		x					
obligation						x		x					
offers	x			x							x		
permission	x	x		x									
possibility	x	x	x	x	x								
prediction									x				
prohibition							x						
requests	x		x	x					x	x			
suggestions											x		
wishing			x							x			



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