

Modals are a special type of auxiliary verb. They always work with another verb.

SUBJECT + MODAL + INFINITIVE VERB (without “to”)

1. Modals do not agree with the subject, unlike other auxiliary verbs.

<i>I can <u>go</u> later.</i>	<i>I am going later.</i>
<i>He can <u>go</u> later.</i>	<i>He is going later.</i>
<i>They can <u>go</u> later.</i>	<i>They are going later.</i>

2. There is always a verb infinitive (without the “to”) after the modal.

*She **must** have her medicine every day.*
*You **will** be sorry for that later.*
*They **might** disagree with you.*

3. Neither the modal nor its accompanying infinitive form can use the past tense. Past tense would only be indicated by other parts of the verb phrase.

<i>She might <u>go</u> to the movies.</i>	<i>She goes to the movies.</i>
<i>She might <u>have</u> gone to the movies.</i>	<i>She went to the movies.</i>
<i>She might <u>have</u> gone to the movies.</i>	<i>She has gone to the movies.</i>
<i>She might <u>have</u> been going to the movies.</i>	<i>She has been going to the movies.</i>

4. Modals make questions by inversion.

<i>She can <u>go</u>.</i>	<i>Can she <u>go</u>?</i>
<i>They might <u>want</u> some.</i>	<i>Might they <u>want</u> some?</i>
<i>They will <u>arrive</u> soon.</i>	<i>Will they <u>arrive</u> soon?</i>

STRONGEST	<i>Logical Possibility</i>	<i>Ability</i>	<i>Necessity</i>	<i>Permission</i>
↑	must	can	must	may
	will/would	could	should	could
	should			can
↓	may			
WEAKEST	can/could/might			

Uses of Various Modals:

<i>Can</i>	<p>present ability -- I <i>can</i> ride a bike. opportunity -- She <i>can</i> help you learn to ride a bike when she is finished. permission -- <i>Can</i> I try to ride the bike now? possibility & conditional -- Anyone <i>can</i> learn to ride, if they are not afraid. request -- <i>Can</i> you teach me to ride a bike? willingness -- I <i>can</i> teach you.</p>
<i>Could</i>	<p>past ability -- I <i>could</i> ride a bike when I was younger. conditional -- He <i>could</i> learn to ride, if his father bought him a bike. possibility -- Bill <i>could</i> be a good rider with more practice. suggestion -- Mark <i>could</i> ride his bike to campus to save money. request -- <i>Could</i> I borrow your bike?</p>
<i>May</i>	<p>polite request or permission -- <i>May</i> I borrow your bike? possibility -- He <i>may</i> be able to assemble your bike tomorrow.</p>
<i>Might</i>	<p>possibility, but not certainty -- I <i>might</i> be able to buy a new bike. conditional -- If the seat is comfortable, it <i>might</i> be a good choice. suggestion -- You <i>might</i> want to lower the seat to reach the pedals.</p>
<i>Must</i>	<p>strong obligation -- You <i>must</i> return the bike in good condition. necessity -- I <i>must</i> get to the bike store before closing.</p>
<i>Shall</i>	<p>formal invitation & future action -- <i>Shall</i> we ride bikes tomorrow? <i>NOTE: British English</i></p>
<i>Should</i>	<p>mild obligation -- You <i>should</i> follow traffic laws when riding your bike. recommendation, or advice -- You <i>should</i> wear your helmet. expectation -- He <i>should</i> finish the race around noon.</p>
<i>Will</i>	<p>future intent -- I <i>will</i> go riding on Sunday. promise -- We <i>will</i> definitely make time to ride together next week. prediction -- The weatherman reports that it <i>will</i> be too windy to bike. voluntary action -- I <i>will</i> go anyway.</p>
<i>Would</i>	<p>conditional -- I <i>would</i> ride the bike at night, if I had a headlamp. past of will -- He <i>would</i> ride his bike before he hurt his knee.</p>