

## Use of Modals Verbs

Modal Auxiliaries are shall, should, will, would, can, could, may, might, dare, need, ought to, used to. Modals are followed by principal/main verbs. They express the mode or manner of happening of an action or event. They are used to give an expression to ideas ability, probability, possibility, permission, obligation, duty, threat, determination, etc.

- Modals do not change according to the number or person of the subject. The modal does not go alone. It always goes with a full verb. Rama can run. They can run.

- Can/could, may/might, will/would, shall/should and must are followed by infinitive without 'to'.

Sita must go to hospital.

Santhosh will help you.

She should keep up her word.

He might leave India shortly.

- Ought and used are followed by the infinitive with 'to'.

You ought to keep up your promise.

He used to teach French.

- The negative is formed by putting 'not' after the auxiliary.

Students must not wear heavy Jewellery with uniform.

She couldn't walk as she fell down recently.

**Can** is used to express

(a) Ability – I can speak English fluently.

(b) Permission – can I smoke in the campus? You can go home now.

(c) Possibility – malaria can be dangerous.

Could is the past tense of can. It is used to express:

(a) Ability in the past – I could easily run fast those days.

(b) A polite request in the present; in the form of a question –

Could I see the manager for a minute?

**May** is used for all persons in the present and future. It is followed by the infinitive without 'to'. May is used to

(a) Seek or grant permission – May I go home in the afternoon?

(b) Express possibility – It may rain in the afternoon.

(c) Express a wish or prayer – May God bless you.

(d) Express a purpose – He goes to gym so that he may be trim.

**Might** is the past tense of May. It is used to express

(a) A doubtful possibility – He might go to a movie.

(b) Permission in the present tense – Might I ask a doubt?

(c) To show permission – He told me I might use his car.

(d) Purpose – He left office early so that he might go for a function.

(e) Suggestion – you might visit the big temple which is on your way to college.

Notice the difference between **May and Might**.

You **may** put the lights on. (Giving permission)

You **might** put the lights on. (Suggesting)

**Might** is used as the past tense of May.

My mother said, "You may go to movie at three.

My mother told me that I might go to the movie at three-o'clock.

**Shall** is used to express the future when the subject is I or We.

I **shall** be sixteen next year.

**Shall** is used to express:

(a) Certainty– If you sing well, you shall be the winner.

(b) Assurance – Take the medicine regularly and you shall be well.

(c) Promise – If you win the match, you shall have a holiday.

(d) Threat – If you do not pass in the exam, you shall be retained in the same class.

(e) Command – All students shall reach the prayer hall by 4.00p.m.

When **shall** is used in questions, it asks the will or the desire of the person addressed.

**Shall** I go with you for the movie?

**Shall** we go to the market?

**Should** is the past tense of shall. Should is used to express:

(a) Duty or moral obligation

We should take care of our parents during oldage.

(b) Advice or instruction or opinion.

You should lock the door when you leave home.

(c) High degree probability

The team should win the trophy for all the efforts taken.

**Should** is used as the past tense of shall. Should have expresses a past unfulfilled duty or a sensible action which was not performed.

You should have worn a grand dress for the party.

**Must** refers to the present or the future tense. It is used to express:

(a) Obligation or necessity – We must obey our parents.

(b) Compulsion – You must finish your assignment by tomorrow.

(c) Possibility – She should have reached home by now.

**Ought** is used nearly in the same sense as should. It is followed by the infinitive 'to'. It is

(a) Used to express duty or moral binding – You ought to send money to your parents.

(b) An inference – The train ought to be arriving late, hence the platform is crowded.

(c) Possibility – He has done well in the interview. He ought to get the job.