

Introducing Modal Verbs

- ❖ Used to describe uncertainty, certainty, suggestion, obligations, probability or ability, or to ask (or give) permission
- ❖ Go in front of present tense
- ❖ I/You/He/She/It/We/They forms are all the same (no final 's' for He/She/It).

9 common modal verbs

can	may	must	shall	will
ability / permission	uncertainty	obligation	= will	certainty
could	might	-	should²	would¹
possibility	unlikely		obligation + uncertainty	Uncertain due to a difficulty

¹ Also used as past tense of 'will'

² "ought to" has the same meaning

Examples: something certain, possible or impossible

- My keys **must** be in the car.
- It **might** rain tomorrow.
- That **can't** be Peter's coat. It's too small.
- I **can't** swim.

Examples: requests and requirements

- **May** I ask a question?
- **Could** I have some tea, please?
- **Would** you like some help?

- You **must** read the instructions.
- You **may** bring a friend.
- Everyone **should** come with a packed lunch.

Add “have” and the past participle when the uncertainty is in the past

- He **might have** caught the bus.
- He **can't have** walked very far in 10 minutes.
- She **would have** waited for at least 15 minutes before phoning.
- It **could have** been a disaster. But, fortunately, the fire engine arrived very quickly.