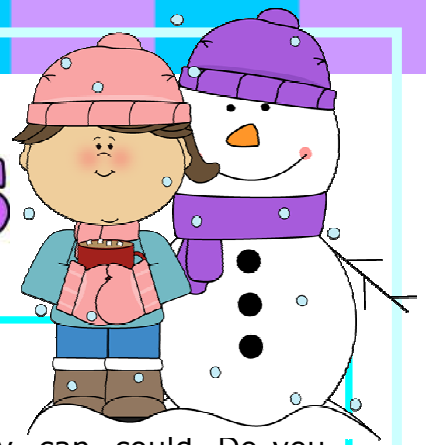




MODAL VERBS & PHRASES



ABILITY

The main modal verbs to express ability are: can, could and be able to.

- Use **can/be able to** to express ability in the present. But in common speech, it's more common to use can.

Examples: She can do computer graphics. She's able to do computer graphics.

- Use **could** or **was/were able to** To express ability (but not a specific achievement) in the past. But remember you can only use was/were able to with a specific achievement or event. (He was able to win the price. **NOT** ~~He could win the price.~~ But you can use could/be able to (past) in the negative form to talk about past ability.

Examples: He couldn't play the guitar. He wasn't able to play the violin.

- For all the other tenses, you must use **be able to** in the suitable form.

Example: I will be able speak English if I keep on practising.

REQUESTS

We often use: will, would, can, could and would you mind/do you fancy...? to talk about requests.

- Use **will/can/could/would** to ask someone to do something.

Example: Can you turn on the TV, please?

Note that **will/can** are more informal, whereas **could/would** are more polite.

- In questions, to make them more polite, you can add *please*.
- Use **would you mind.../do you fancy... + GERUND** to make polite requests. (Note negative statements as answer is positive).
- In these requests, you are expected to give a positive answer. If not, you must give an argument.

PERMISSION

The main modals of permission are: may, can, could, Do you mind if...?, be allowed to and might.

- Use **may/could/can** to ask for permission.

Examples: May I leave the room, teacher?/ Can I come in?/ Could you open the windows, please?

But, remember when we ask for permission, it's always something about the present or the future. (it's not the past).

- Use **Do you mind if...?** in order to ask for permission because your action might bother someone.

Example: Do you mind if I leave the room? Not at all. (The answer must be negative if you can leave it).

- Use **be allowed to** to express the permission that someone has given to you.

Example: I'm allowed to leave. (someone has given me the permission to leave).

- For the answers, you can only use **can/may**. Could is only for questions.

Example: Could I borrow the pencil? Yes, you can. (**NOT** ~~Yes, you could~~)

- Normally, when someone refuses to give permission, he always gives an argument to explain it. But if the rules are clear, then the answer is clear.

EXPECTATIONS

Use **be supposed to** for expectations.

- The main uses are:
 - Rules and usual ways to do sth.
 - Predictions
 - Hearsay (what people say).
 - Plans or arrangements.
- This modal verb can only be used in present or past.

Examples: This beach *was supposed to be* the best in Spain/ The groom is *supposed to arrive* soon at the ceremony (tradition)

ADVICE

The main modals to talk about advice are: should/ought to and had better.

- Use **ought to/should** to say something advisable.

Examples: You should go to the dentist/
You ought to read the advert.

- We use **had better** for an urgent advice -when you believe that something bad will happen if the person doesn't follow the advice.

Example: You'd better go to the doctor or you'll have serious problems.

Usually, we contract had better by just adding 'd better. And the negative form of it is *had better not*.

Remember, had better is only to talk about the present or the future, not the past.

- For questions, only **should** can be used.

Example: Should I apply for that job?

- Normally, it's impolite to advice people if they hadn't told you to advice them. That's why when you want to advice somebody about something, you should use adverbs like *maybe, perhaps, I think...*

SUGGESTIONS

- The main words to talk about suggestions are: could, why don't...?, how about...? why not...? let's... and so on.
- When we ask using **why not and why don't/doesn't** to make a suggestion, the speaker doesn't expect a complete answer. Just adverbs like: Ok, it's a good idea, right...
- **Let's...** always includes the speaker. (It is a suggestion for both the speaker and the listener.)

Example: Let's go to Pakistan (Both them)

- Note the form of these expressions!
a) Let's take the train.
b) Why don't we take the train?
c) How about taking the train?
d) Maybe we could take the train.
- ALSO REMEMBER TO ADD THE ? to the questions!!

PREFERENCES

- The main words to talk about are **prefer, would prefer** and **would rather**.
- Use these modal verbs to talk about things that you like better than others. But remember **prefer** is used for general preference and **would rather and would prefer** for more particular situations.
- **Prefer** and **would prefer** may be followed by a noun, gerund or infinitive. **Would rather** can be followed by only the base of the verb.
- Use **would rather not** to refuse an offer, suggestion or invitation.

Examples: Would you like to have some dessert? I'd rather not. I've eaten too much.

- When we want to compare, we must follow this structures:

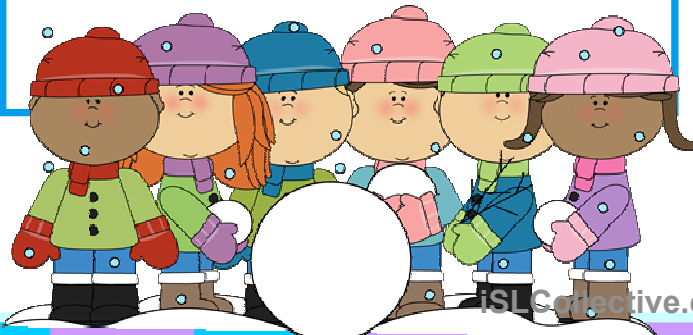
- a) Lani **prefers** comedies to action films.
NOUN
- b) I'd **prefer** visiting Lani to **going** there.
- c) I'd **rather** watch football **than** play it.

NECESSITY

- Use **must** and **have (got) to** to express necessity.
- **Have to** is the most common expression in everyday use.
- **Have got to** often expresses strong feelings.
- **Must** is used in writing (forms, signs, notices) and in spoken English in:
 - The speaker has the power (You must clean it).
 - There's urgent necessity.

REMEMBER! **Mustn't** and **don't have to** have very different meanings.

- **Have to** can be used in all tenses and all forms. But **must and have got to** only for present or future. Use **have to** for questions.



CHOICE/NO CHOICE

- **Have to** and **must** have very similar meanings. They both mean something is necessary or required.
- **Must** normally express an obligation and also something I say I have to do. **Have to** is used to say something that someone has told me to do.

Ex. The teacher tells the students they **MUST** do a composition and when the class finishes, the Ss say, we **HAVE TO** do a composition.

- **Don't/Doesn't have to** and **must** have very different meanings. Don't/doesn't have to indicates something that is not necessary (lack of necessity) and so that, there's choice (another possibility).
- **Mustn't** means that something is not allowed or it's against rules, there's no choice.
- **Must not** is used to express prohibition in writing. In informal English, it's more common to say **can't**.
- **Not have to** can be used with all tenses and forms, but **mustn't** can only be used in present or future.

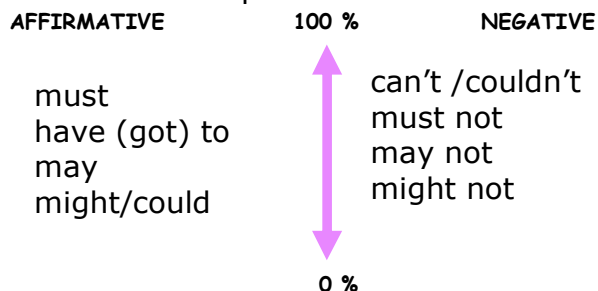
FUTURE POSSIBILITY

- Use may, might, will, could or shall to express future possibility.
Note: It's not the same may be than maybe. May + be it's a modal and a verb and maybe it's an adverb of possibility.
- Use **may not/might not** to express the possibility that something will not happen.
- Use **couldn't** to say that something is possible.
- **Might not** is rarely contracted and **may not** is never contracted.
- Use **will/shall** to talk about predictions based on an opinion or either a prediction about the future. Shall is more polite than will.
- Questions about possibility aren't formed by may, might or could. They are formed with the future tenses (will, be going to...) and the answer of these questions can be these modal verbs.

Example: Will the office close early? It may.

ASSUMPTIONS

- We often make **assumptions** or "best guesses" based on an information we have about a present situation. The modal we choose depends on how certain is our assumption:



- When you are 100% sure that something is possible, use **must, have to** and **have got to**.
- When you are less certain, use **may, might** and/or **could**.
- When you are 100% certain that something is impossible, use **can't/couldn't**.

When you're slightly less certain, use **must not**, and when you are less certain, use **may/might not**.

REMEMBER! **have to/have got to** can't be used to make negative assumptions.

- Use **could** in questions. But also, (very rare) **might/may** can be used.
- In short answers, use have (got) to or a modal alone.
- Use **be** in short answers with be-questions.

ADVISABILITY IN THE PAST

- Use **should have, ought to have, might have** and **could have** to talk about things that were advisable in the past. These modals often express regret and/or blame.


Example: "You *might've* told me" (You didn't told me, that wasn't OK).

- **Should not have/Ought not to have** are the only forms used in negative past advisability.
- The most common in questions is **should have**.

PRONUNTIATION: In informal english, have is not stressed, that's why you have to pronounce like /a/. Example: You **could have visited** him (You coulda)

SPECULATIONS ABOUT THE PAST

- We often “speculate” or make “best guesses”, about past situations based on the facts that we have. The modal we choose depends on how certain are we about our speculations.

AFFIRMATIVE	100 %	NEGATIVE
must have		can't have
had to have		couldn't have
may have		mustn't have
may have		may not have
could have		might not have
	0 %	

- When you are almost a 100% certain that something was possible, use **must have** or **had to have**.

Examples:

-These stones are very big.

SPECULATION: They **must have** been hard to move.

- When we are less certain use: **may/might/could have**.
- When we are a 100% sure that something is impossible, we use **can't/couldn't have**.
- When something is slightly less certain, use **must not** and when something is less certain: **may/might not**.
- We use **could have** in questions about possibility.