

Modals: Review by Use

USE: Modals auxiliary verbs are widely used in English in a variety of communicative functions. Some modals can be used for more than one communicative function. Here is an overview of the different communicative functions and the modals that are used in those situations.

- **To express ability**

I can speak French.

I am able to speak French.

- **To express obligation**

You ought to thank your grandparents for the present.

You have to thank your grandparents for the present.

- **To express necessity**

You must get your passport renewed.

You have to get your passport renewed.

- **To express possibility**

It could snow tomorrow.

It might snow tomorrow.

It may snow tomorrow.

- **To speculate**

Her coffee is still warm. She must have just left.

Her coffee is still warm. She could have just left.

Her coffee is still warm. She might have just left.

Her coffee is still warm. She may have just left.

- **To predict**

They left two hours ago. They should arrive soon.

- **To express disapproval**

You should have called before you came over!

You could have called before you came over!

- **To request**

Can you open the door for me?

Would you open the door for me?

- **To offer**

Would you like a coffee?

May I get you a coffee?

Can I get you a coffee?

- **To ask for or grant permission**

Can I use your bathroom?

May I use your bathroom?

You can use the bathroom upstairs.

You may use the bathroom upstairs.

- **To advise**

You ought to call your parents.

You should call your parents.

You had better call your parents.

- **To suggest**

You could buy the dress first and then buy the jacket later.

- **To invite**

Would you like to go to the movies tonight?

Underline the MODALS in the example sentences below. Indicate the USE of the modals in sentences below. Choose from the list of USES on the previous two pages.

Example Sentence

USE (choose from the list on the previous two pages)

1. Can you help me with my homework? I am finding it very difficult. _____
2. Can I open the window? It's cold in here. _____
3. I can figure skate and play ice hockey as well. _____
4. May I help you with anything? _____
5. You have to finish that report tonight. It is due tomorrow. _____
6. She may decide to marry him after all. Who knows. _____
7. School could be cancelled tomorrow. There is a big snowstorm coming. _____
8. You ought to invite your next door neighbour to the party. _____
9. They must have gone already. All of the lights are off. _____
10. You shouldn't eat too much chocolate. It's not good for you. _____
11. You must get a visa before you go to China. _____
12. May I use your phone? _____
13. I have an extra theatre ticket. Would you like to go and see Mama Mia tonight? _____
14. You had better go to the doctor's. You have been coughing for two weeks! _____
15. You have to buy the right currency before you travel abroad. _____

Example Sentence

USE (choose from the list on the previous two pages)

- 16. You could have told me you were going to be late! Now your dinner is cold!
- 17. You ought to plan your itinerary before you go.
- 18. You could call him and ask him out. It is better to know if he is interested!
- 19. The thief might have entered through the window. Look, it's broken.
- 20. You had better study tonight. Otherwise you will fail the test tomorrow.
- 21. We might have a snowstorm overnight.
- 22. Could you pass the salt please?
- 23. You should drive more slowly. You will get a speeding ticket.
- 24. She may have left already. No one is answering the phone.
- 25. Can I get you another drink or something to eat?

Explain the differences between the sentences in the groups below.

1. a) Can you help me?
b) Can I get you a coffee?
c) Can you play soccer?

2. a) You should call her.
b) You should have called her!
c) She should call soon. She said she would.

3. a) You must pass the test tomorrow if you want to go to the next level.
b) She must have passed the test. She is in the next level.

4. a) You could study first and then go to the movies.
b) Could you answer the phone?
c) You could have answered the phone!

5. a) I would buy the black dress if I were you.
b) Would you like to go to a concert tonight?
c) Would you open this jar for me? It's stuck.

6. a) She may have left already. There is no answer.
b) May I have a cheeseburger and fries please?
c) May I get you anything else?