



INDIAN SCHOOL AL WADI AL KABIR

Class: X

WORKSHEET (2026-2027)

SUBJECT: ENGLISH

TOPIC: MODAL VERBS

What Are Modal Verbs?

Modal verbs are helping verbs that are used along with main verbs to represent the ability, possibility and probability of a subject to do an action and emphasize the necessity of an action.

Modal verbs for ability - can, could

Modal verbs for possibility - may, could, can, might

Modal verbs for obligation - should, must, have to, ought to

Modal verbs for necessity - need, must

Consider the difference between these two examples:

I swim every Tuesday.

I can swim every Tuesday.

The first example is a simple factual statement. The speaker participates in a swimming activity every week on Tuesdays.

The second example uses the modal verb can. Notice how the meaning changes slightly. The speaker does not necessarily swim every Tuesday; they're saying that they are capable of swimming every Tuesday or that the possibility exists for them to swim every Tuesday. It's hypothetical.

A modal verb is a type of verb that contextually indicates a modality such as a likelihood, ability, permission, request, capacity, suggestion, order, obligation, necessity, possibility or advice. Modal verbs generally accompany the base form of another verb.

In easier words, Modal Verbs are the verbs that are used before main verbs to express permission/necessity/certainty/ability etc.

E.g.: I **can** eat an entire pizza.

My keys **must** be in the car.

It **might** rain tomorrow.

May I ask a question?

Types of Modals

Here are the different types of modal verbs and their meanings:

1. Modals of ability:

- Can: Used to express present ability

Example: "I can speak three languages.

- Could: Used to express past ability or present inability.

Example: I could help you later, but I'm busy now.

2. Modals of possibility:

- May: Used to express possibility or permission.

Example: It may rain tomorrow.

- Might: Used to express a lower degree of possibility than “may.”

Example: I might win the lottery this week

- Can/Could: Can also be used to express possibility, especially in informal contexts.

Example: It could be sunny tomorrow, despite the forecast.

3. Modals of Probability

- May/Might: Express a possibility or chance that something is true or will happen. They suggest a less certain degree of probability than “must” or “should.”

Example: “It may rain tomorrow, so bring an umbrella just in case.”

- Could: Indicates a possible but uncertain situation. It’s often used to suggest a less likely possibility than “may” or “might.”

Example: “The traffic could be bad this evening, so let’s leave early.”

- Must: Expresses a strong degree of certainty, often based on evidence or logical reasoning. It implies that something is almost certainly true or likely to happen.

Example: “She’s been studying all night. She must be exhausted.”

- Should: Implies a strong expectation based on what is normal or expected. It suggests that something is likely to happen or be true, but there’s a possibility it might not.

Example: “The train should arrive on time, but you never know with public transport.”

4. Modals of obligation:

- Must: Used to express strong obligation or necessity.

Example: Students must wear ID cards at all times.

- Have to: Used to express external obligation or necessity.

Example: I have to finish this report before the deadline.

- Should: Used to express advice or suggestion.

Example: “You should apologize for your bad behavior.

- Ought to: Expresses a strong expectation or recommendation based on what is considered desirable or appropriate. Implies a high degree of certainty about what is likely to happen or be true.

Example: He ought to have finished his work by now.

5. Modals of advice:

- Should: It suggests that something is a good idea or the right thing to do.

Example: You should get some rest before your big presentation tomorrow.

- Ought to: Formal and suggests a stronger sense of obligation or duty.

Example: You ought to apologize to your friend for what you said.

- Must: This modal conveys a strong obligation or necessity.

Example: You must study hard for your exams.

- Could: “could” can be used to make suggestions in a more tentative or polite way.

Example: You could ask your neighbor for help.

6. Modals of permission:

- May: Used to ask for permission or give permission.

Example: May I use your computer?

- Can: Can also be used to ask for permission in informal contexts.

Example: Can you please pass the salt?

7. Modals of Prohibition:

- Must not (mustn't): Used for strong prohibition, often associated with rules, laws, or strict instructions.

Example: “Students must not cheat on exams.”

- Cannot (can't): Expresses impossibility due to lack of ability, permission, or circumstance.

Example: “You can't drive without a license.”

- May not: Formal, polite way to express prohibition, often used in requests or instructions.

Example: “May I ask you not to speak loudly in the room.”

- Should not (shouldn't): Suggests strong advice against doing something due to potential negative consequences.

Example: “You shouldn't eat too much junk food.”

- Ought not to: Similar to “should not,” but slightly more formal and emphasizes the undesirability of the action.

Example: “You ought not to treat your friends badly.

- Will not: Strong determination not to do something, often used in personal declarations or promises.

Example: “I will not give up on my dream.”

MAY

'May' is a modal verb that is used to: Express possibility, Ask for/give permission, Express wishes, Make a Suggestion

Expressing Possibility

'May' is used to express possibility or likelihood of something happening, but with a level of uncertainty or lack of certainty.

I may be late, so don't wait for me. Well, I may have been wrong.

Asking for/Giving Permission

'May' is used to politely ask for permission to do something. Using 'May I...?' is more polite and more formal than using 'Can I...?' or 'Could I...?' May I come in? May I answer this call?

You can also use 'may' to politely give permission to somebody.

You may come in. You may talk.

Expressing Wishes

You can use 'may' to express wishes. In this function, you can only use 'may'. 'May' and 'might' are not interchangeable in this case.

May she rest in peace.

May all your wishes come true.

Making a Suggestion

'May' can be used in both spoken and formal English to ask something or make a *suggestion in a polite manner.

May I suggest that you consider asking a professional?

May I suggest that you listen to your mother?

May expresses a high possibility of something happening, whereas *might* hints that it *might* not happen.

- **POSSIBILITY**

Both may and might can be used to express possibility. Some examples: *It **might** rain tonight.*

- *She **might not come** to the meeting. I **may need** your help on this project. He **may be waiting** for us.*

Questions: When *may* is used in a question, it refers to permission.

Might can be used in a question about possibility.

Might it rain later? (This form is not used in American English.)

Do you think it might rain?

May and might in the past:

The past form is may/might + have + past participle. I **might have left** my phone at home.

She **might not have seen** my email.

Where is Amanda? I think she **may have forgotten** about the meeting.

PERMISSION-

May can be used to express permission. This could be in the context of an adult speaking to a child or an authority speaking in a formal context. You **may have** a cookie after you finish your dinner. (adult to child)

You **may now begin** your exam. (professor to students)

Questions: *May* can be used in a question to ask permission. The subject is usually first person singular or plural (I or we). *May* is considered more polite than can. **May I borrow** your pen?

May I use your restroom, please?

May we come in?

OUGHT TO

Ought to has a similar meaning to should. They both express the conditional: in other words, they refer to a recommended future action.

You ought to pay him back shortly.

You should pay him back in the near future.

She oughtn't speak so loudly. It would be better if she didn't speak so loudly.

You ought not (to) speak with your mouth full. You should not speak with your mouth full.

Used less frequently than should, ought is always followed by a verb in the infinitive with to, except in the negative form, where we don't need to add to:

You ought not (to) ask so many questions. It would be better if you didn't ask so many questions.

Note: ought to does not have a past form. It is only used with reference to the present and the future. Ought to have + past participle is used to express (past) regret:

I ought to have apologized him when I had the chance. I regret not apologizing him when I had a chance to.

WILL AND SHALL

Will and *shall* are modal verbs. They are used with the base form of the main verb (*They will go; I shall ask her*). *Shall* is only used for future time reference with *I* and *we*, and is more formal than *will*.

Will and shall: uses

Predictions

We use will and shall to make predictions and to state facts about the future:

There will be strong winds tomorrow in the south of the country.

The year 2025 will be the four-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the university.

We shall need an extra bedroom when the new baby arrives.

Decisions and offers

Will and shall (usually in the short form 'll) are used to announce decisions and to make offers:

Shall with I and we

Must vs. Have to

Must can be replaced by **Have to** with little difference in meaning:

You **have to** study. (= you **must** study)

He **has to** finish the report by Friday. (= He **must** finish the report by Friday)

Have to is a more informal while **Must** is mostly used in written orders or instructions.

Also, **Must** expresses obligation imposed by the speaker while **Have to** expresses external obligation.

Teacher: You **must** complete this essay by Friday

Student: We **have to** complete this essay by Friday.

When we are mentioning someone else's obligations, we use **Have to**.

John **has to** quit smoking.

For questions it is more common to use **Have to** instead of **Must** (which sounds very formal):

When **do** you **have to** finish the report? **Does** he **have to** take a blood test?

The past tense of **Must** is **Had to**: I had to pay my speeding ticket yesterday.

Mustn't vs. Don't have to

Be careful with the negative of **Must** and **Have to** where they DO have a different meaning. **Mustn't** is a negative obligation (= it is important that you do NOT do something) while **Don't have to** is an absence of obligation.

Mustn't = it is prohibited; it is not allowed

Don't have to = no obligation; you are not required to do something, especially if you don't want to.

You **must not** drink that. (= it is forbidden to drink that; it is not allowed)

You **don't have to** drink that. (= you don't need to drink that but you can if you want)

You **mustn't** tell John (= Do *not* tell John)

You **don't have to** tell John (= you can tell John if you want to but it is not necessary)

I. Fill in the blank with the most appropriate modal verbs.

1. You _____ not touch that vase, it's very fragile. (must / may not / can)

Answer: must not

2. We _____ leave early tomorrow if we want to avoid the traffic. (may / can / should)

Answer: should

3. There's a chance it _____ rain later this afternoon. (might / ought to / will)

Answer: might

4. _____ you please open the window? (could / should/ might)

Answer: could

5. You _____ get more exercise. It's good for your health. (should / must / need)

Answer: should

6. If I were you, I _____ apologize for the bad behavior. (would / must / might)

Answer: would

7. Students _____ wear their uniforms to school on weekdays. (have to / may / could)

Answer: have to

8. I _____ finish this project before the deadline. (must / shall / can)

Answer: must

9. The train _____ arrive any minute now. (must / should / can)

Answer: should

10. You _____ try this new restaurant; it has amazing reviews. (should / can / could)

Answer: should

11. I'm not sure if I _____ attend the meeting tomorrow, given my busy schedule. (will / can / could)

Answer: can

12. You _____ speak to the manager if you have any complaints. (should / may / will)

Answer: should

13. You _____ visit the Dentist at least twice a year. (shall / may / should)

Answer: should

14. _____ you please help me with these bags? (Can / Would / Should)

Answer: Could

15. You _____ respect your elders, no matter what. (should / have to / may)

Answer: should

16. We _____ not be able to go on vacation this year due to financial constraints. (may / might / must)

Answer: may

17. _____ I borrow your pen for a moment? (Can / May / Should)

Answer: May

18. He _____ play the guitar very well when he was younger. (can / could / may)

Answer: could

19. She _____ speak three languages fluently. (can / could / may)

Answer: can

20. If I _____ win the lottery, I would travel the world. (would / will / could)

Answer: would

II. Complete the dialogues using the most appropriate modal verbs.

1. Characters: A student (Maya) and a librarian (Mr. Sharma)

Maya: _____ (A- may/ can) I borrow these four books, please?

Mr. Sharma: Students _____ (B – will/can) only borrow two books at a time. (Library rules)

Maya: _____ (C- will/could) you please let me borrow just one more? I _____ (D – must /have to) submit my assignment next week. I promise to return them all on time.

Mr. Sharma: Hmm... Well, in this case, you _____ (E- can / should) take one more as long as you're very careful with them.

Ans.

A. May

B. can

C. could

D. have

E. can

2. Two friends Rahul and Tushar in a cafeteria.

Rahul: I _____ (A- couldn't / can't) decide what to get. Everything looks so good!

Tushar: Well, you _____ (B- could / must) definitely try the cheeseburger. It's their specialty.

Rahul: Hmm, I feel I _____ (C-should / must) not eat junk more than once a week.

Tushar: Okay, then you _____ (D- must/have to) try the veggie pasta. It's super healthy and delicious.

Rahul: That sounds good! I _____ (E- may / might) just go for that. Thanks!

Ans.

A. can't

B. must

C. should

- D. must
- E. might

3. Liam and Emma out in a field.

Liam: Wow, look at those clouds! I think it _____ (A- can/might) rain soon.

Emma: You're right! We _____ (B- should/must) probably head for shelter before it starts to pour.

Liam: Yes, I _____ (C- can/could) not risk getting sick when exams are round the corner.

Liam: Good idea! Let's run across the street. We _____ (D-can/may) find shelter there.

Emma: Perfect! And who knows, maybe it _____ (E- will/should) clear up soon and we can shop for some stationery items.

Ans.

- A. might
- B. should
- C. can
- D. may
- E. will

4. Security Checkpoint

Security Person: Sir, I'm afraid you _____ (A- won't / can't) bring this knife through security. It's a prohibited item.

Mark: Oh, come on! It's just a little pocket knife.

Security Person: I understand, but rules are rules. Sharp objects are not allowed on board for safety reasons. You'll _____ (B-have to/ must) discard it before proceeding.

Mark: What am I supposed to do with it then? I can't just leave it here!

Security Person: There are a few options. You _____ (C- could / may) mail it back home or arrange for someone to pick it up from the airport. If it's not valuable, you _____ (D- might / may) be able to dispose of it in the designated bin here.

Mark: This is so frustrating!

Security Person: I'm really sorry, but no exceptions _____ (E-can/will) be made for prohibited items. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Ans.

- A. can't
- B. have to
- C. could
- D. might
- E. can

5. A student and a teacher

Ben: These math problems are so hard! I _____ (A – will/may) fail if this question is asked in the test.

Teacher: Don't worry, Ben. I _____ (B – could/may/will) help you.

Ben: _____ (C – Could/Will) you maybe teach me shortcuts to arrive at the solution?

Teacher: No shortcuts, unfortunately. But I _____ (D-can/could) offer you some strategies. Perhaps if we rewrite the equation or draw a diagram, it might spark something new.

Ben: Yes, let me try solving it again.

Teacher: You _____ (E- can/could) do this, Ben. You've always been good at math, and with a little patience and guidance, you'll crack this nut in no time.

Ans.

- A. may
- B. will
- C. Could
- D. can
- E. can