

Modals in English Grammar

1. *can*

Use	Examples
ability to do sth. in the present (substitute form: to be able to)	I can speak English.
permission to do sth. in the present (substitute form: to be allowed to)	Can I go to the cinema?
request	Can you wait a moment, please?
offer	I can lend you my car till tomorrow.
suggestion	Can we visit Grandma at the weekend?
possibility	It can get very hot in Arizona.

2. *could*

Use	Examples
ability to do sth. in the past (substitute form: to be able to)	I could speak English.
permission to do sth. in the past (substitute form: to be allowed to)	I could go to the cinema.
polite question *	Could I go to the cinema, please?
polite request *	Could you wait a moment, please?
polite offer *	I could lend you my car till tomorrow.
polite suggestion *	Could we visit Grandma at the weekend?
possibility *	It could get very hot in Montana.

3. *may*

Use	Examples
possibility	It may rain today.
permission to do sth. in the present (substitute form: to be allowed to)	May I go to the cinema?

Use	Examples
polite suggestion	May I help you?

4. *might*

Use	Examples
possibility (less possible than may) *	It might rain today.
hesitant offer *	Might I help you?

5. *must*

Use	Examples
force, necessity	I must go to the supermarket today.
possibility	You must be tired.
advice, recommendation	You must see the new film with Brad Pitt.

6. *must not/may not*

Use	Examples
prohibition (must is a little stronger)	You mustn't work on dad's computer.
	You may not work on dad's computer.

7. *need not*

Use	Examples
sth. is not necessary	I needn't go to the supermarket, we're going to the restaurant tonight.

8. *ought to*

similar to *should* – *ought to* sounds a little less subjective

Use	Examples
advice	You ought to drive carefully in bad weather.
obligation	You ought to switch off the light when you leave the room.

9. *shall*

used instead of *will* in the 1st person

Use	Examples
suggestion	Shall I carry your bag?

10. *should*

Use	Examples
advice	You should drive carefully in bad weather.
obligation	You should switch off the light when you leave the room.

11. *will*

Use	Examples
wish, request, demand, order (less polite than would)	Will you please shut the door?
prediction, assumption	I think it will rain on Friday.
promise	I will stop smoking.
spontaneous decision	Can somebody drive me to the station? - I will .

Use	Examples
habits	She's strange, she'll sit for hours without talking.

12. *would*

Use	Examples
wish, request (more polite than will)	Would you shut the door, please?
habits in the past	Sometimes he would bring me some flowers.

* These are no past forms, they refer to the future.

II/Fill in the blanks with the correct modals given in the brackets.

God is great and we (a) _____ (should/would) be grateful to him. We (b) _____ (might/should) do our duty and leave the reward in the hands of God. Ultimately, God (c) _____ (might/will) help us. We (d) _____ (might/should/may) leave everything to God.