

Modal Verbs Made Simple: Speak with Confidence!

Welcome to your next step in the [English journey](#)! Today, we explore **modal verbs in English with examples**.—These are small but powerful words that help us express ability, possibility, permission, and more. Let’s break them down one by one, with examples and tips so you can use them right away.

We'll look at these words with examples:

Lesson 1: CAN; Lesson 2: COULD; Lesson 3: WILL; Lesson 4: WOULD; Lesson 5: SHALL;
Lesson 6: SHOULD; Lesson 7: MAY; Lesson 8: MIGHT; Lesson 9: MUST

◆ But What Are Modal Verbs? — Before diving in.

Modal verbs are special helping words. They come before the main verb and change slightly the meaning of this verb. For example:

- **I can swim.** (ability)
- **You should study.** (advice)
- **He might come.** (possibility)

They don’t change form (no -s, -ing, or -ed), and they’re followed by the base verb (no “to”). [See verbs here](#).

English Modal Verbs List: Lesson 1 - CAN

What does “can” mean?

Can is used to talk about:

- **Ability:** what someone is able to do
- **Permission:** what someone is allowed to do
- **Possibility:** what is possible

Structure

Subject + can + base verb

- I **can** swim.
- She **can** speak English.
- We **can** go now.

✓ No “to” after *can*

✓ No -s, -ing, or -ed endings

English Modal Verbs List in Context: "Can"

Use	Example	Meaning
Ability	I can cook rice.	I know how to cook rice.
Permission	Can I use your phone?	Am I allowed to use it?
Possibility	It can be very hot in November. It is possible.	

Find here a list of [8 English verbs](#) to practice with the modal verb "CAN"

Mozambican Context

- I can speak Portuguese and English.
- Can we meet at the market tomorrow?
- You can find fresh bread in the morning.

Practice

Fill in the blanks with "can":

1. I ___ read and write in English.
2. ___ you help me with my homework?
3. We ___ walk to school together.
4. My brother ___ fix bicycles.
5. ___ I ask a question?

Practicing is the key factor for building confidence and so become fluent in the language. See the [building confidence tips](#).

English Modal Verbs List: Affirmative / Negative / Question with "Can"

Type	Example
Affirmative	I can dance.
Negative	I cannot (can't) dance.
Question	Can you dance?

Quick Tips

- Use **can** to show confidence: "I can do it!"
- Use **can't** to express limits: "I can't come today."
- Use **Can I...?** to ask politely.

Audio Prompt Ideas

You can record these sentences with “can” or ask a local speaker to read them aloud:

“I can speak English.”

“Can you help me?”

“She can cook matapa.”

“We can learn together.”

“Can I ask a question?”

Visit our "[free speaking practice resources](#)" to practice listening skills or download a PDF resource.

English Modal Verbs List: Lesson 2: COULD

What does “Could” mean?

Could is used to talk about:

- **Past ability**
- **Polite requests**
- **Possibility (less certain than “can”)**

Structure

Subject + could + base verb

- I **could** swim when I was a child.
- **Could** you help me, please?
- It **could** rain later.

✓ No “to” after *could*

✓ No -s, -ing, or -ed endings

English Modal Verbs List in Context: “Could”

Use	Example	Meaning
Past ability	I could read at age five.	I was able to do it before.
Polite request	Could you open the window?	A gentle way to ask.
Possibility	It could be dangerous.	Maybe, but not sure.

Mozambican Context

- I could speak Sena when I was younger.
- Could you show me how to cook xima?
- It could be very hot in November.

Practice

Fill in the blanks with “could”:

1. When I was 10, I ___ ride a bicycle.
2. ___ you help me with my homework?
3. We ___ hear music from the street.
4. He ___ speak Portuguese before moving to Maputo.
5. ___ I ask a question?

Affirmative / Negative / Question

Type	Example
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Affirmative I could dance.

Negative I **could not** (couldn't) dance.

Question Could you dance?

Quick Tips

- Use **could** for polite requests: “Could you help me?”
- Use **couldn't** to talk about things you couldn't do before.
- Use **could** to talk about possibilities: “It could be true.”

Audio Prompt Ideas

Record or read aloud and slowly these sentences under “could”:

“I could speak English when I was younger.”

“Could you help me?”

“She could cook matapa very well.”

“We could go to the beach.”

“Could I ask a question?”

The modal verb “could”, builds gently on the previous “can” lesson while introducing polite and past uses.

Visit the "[Everyday English Conversation Phrases](#)" article to learn vocabulary for talking about home, neighborhood, jobs, studies and hobbies.

English Modal Verbs List: Lesson 3: WILL

What does "will" mean?

Will is used to talk about:

- **Future actions**
- **Promises or decisions**
- **Predictions**

Structure

Subject + will + base verb

- I **will** study tomorrow.
- She **will** help us.
- We **will** go to the market.

Note this: In all examples we have gone through with modal verbs so far:

✓ No "to" after *will*

✓ No -s, -ing, or -ed endings

Examples in Context

Use	Example	Meaning
Future action	I will visit my aunt.	I plan to do it later.
Promise	I will help you.	I give my word.
Prediction	It will rain tomorrow.	I think it will happen.

Mozambican Context

- **I will study English after lunch.**
- **We will go to the beach on Saturday.**
- **My brother will fix the radio.**

Practice

Fill in the blanks with “will”:

1. I ___ call you later.
2. She ___ cook matapa for dinner.
3. We ___ meet at the school gate.
4. It ___ be sunny tomorrow.
5. They ___ bring the books.

English Modal Verbs List: Affirmative / Negative / (Question with Will)

Type	Example
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Affirmative	I will dance.
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Negative	I will not (won't) dance.
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Question	Will you dance?
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Quick Tips

- Use **will** to show confidence: “I will do it!”
- Use **won't** to say you won't do something: “I won't forget.”
- Use **Will you...?** to ask about future plans.

Audio Prompt Ideas

Record or read aloud slowly:

“I will study English tomorrow.”

“Will you help me?”

“She will cook beans.”

“We will go to the market.”

“It will be hot in November.”

The modal verb “**will**”, helps you express future actions and promises with confidence. See [verbs to use with this modal verbs](#).

English Modal Verbs List: Lesson 4 -WOULD

What does “would” mean?

Would is used to talk about:

- **Polite requests or offers**

- Imaginary or unreal situations
- Preferences or habits (in the past)

Structure

Subject + would + base verb

- I **would** like some tea.
- She **would** help if she had time.
- We **would** visit if we had money.

✓ No “to” after *would*

✓ No -s, -ing, or -ed endings

English Modal Verbs List in Context: “Would”

Use	Example	Meaning
Polite request	Would you help me?	Gentle way to ask
Imaginary	I would travel if I had money.	Not real, just imagining
Preference	I would rather stay home.	I prefer this

Mozambican Context

- **Would you like some “tea with milk?”**
- **I would visit Beira if I had time.**
- **We would help, but we are busy today.**

Practice

Fill in the blanks with “would”:

1. I ___ like to learn English.
2. ___ you help me with my homework?
3. We ___ go to the beach if it were sunny.
4. He ___ rather eat xima than bread.
5. They ___ come if they had transport.

English Modal Verbs List: Affirmative / Negative / Question (with would)

Type	Example
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Affirmative	I would dance.
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Type	Example
Negative	I would not (wouldn't) dance.
Question	Would you dance?

Quick Tips

- Use **would** to sound polite: “Would you like...?”
- Use **wouldn't** to say no gently: “I wouldn't go there.”
- Use **would** to imagine: “I would live in Quelimane if I could.”

Audio Prompt Ideas

Record or read aloud slowly:

- “I would like to learn English.”
- “Would you help me?”
- “She would cook rice if she had time.”
- “We would go to the market.”
- “Would you like some tea?”

Your fourth focused lesson and its examples—this time on the modal verb “**would**”, gently introduces polite speech and imaginary situations. It was crafted to help you sound respectful and thoughtful in English, as you speak.

Modal Verbs: Lesson 5: SHALL

What does “shall” mean?

Shall is used to:

- **Make suggestions**
- **Offer help or ideas**
- **Ask for agreement (especially in formal or polite situations)**

Structure

Subject + shall + base verb

- **Shall** we begin?
- **Shall** I help you?
- What **shall** we do next?

- ✓ No “to” after *shall*
- ✓ No -s, -ing, or -ed endings
- ✓ Mostly used with **I** and **we**

English Modal Verbs List with Examples in Context: “Shall”

Use	Example	Meaning
Suggestion	Shall we go to the market?	Let’s go together.
Offer	Shall I carry your bag?	Do you want help?
Agreement	What shall we cook today?	Let’s decide together.

Mozambican Context

- Shall we study English after lunch?
- Shall I help you with your phone?
- What shall we bring to the church event?

Practice

Fill in the blanks with “shall”:

1. ___ we begin the lesson now?
2. ___ I help you with your homework?
3. What ___ we cook for dinner?
4. ___ we go to the Cabo Delgado on Saturday?
5. ___ I call you later?

English Modal Verbs List: Affirmative / Negative / Question (with Shall)

Type	Example
Affirmative	We shall meet again.
Negative	We shall not (shan’t) meet again. (<i>rare</i>)
Question	Shall we meet again?

Quick Tips

- Use **shall** mostly with **I** and **we**.
- Use it for polite offers: “Shall I help you?”
- Use it for group suggestions: “Shall we go?”

Audio Prompt Ideas

Record or read aloud slowly the modal verbs sentences examples:

“Shall we begin?”

“Shall I help you?”

“What shall we do today?”

“Shall we go to the market?”

“Shall I carry your bag?”

The modal verb “shall”, is less common in everyday speech. But useful for formal suggestions and offers, especially in British English.

Modal Verbs with Examples: Lesson 6: SHOULD

What does “should” mean?

Should is used to:

- Give advice or recommendations
- Express expectations or duty
- Talk about what is right or wise

Structure

Subject + should + base verb

- You **should** study English every day.
- We **should** help our neighbors.
- He **should** arrive soon.

✓ No “to” after *should*

✓ No -s, -ing, or -ed endings

English Modal Verbs List in Context: “Should”

Use	Example	Meaning
Advice	You should drink clean water.	It’s a good idea.
Expectation	She should be here by now.	I expect her to arrive.
Duty	We should respect our elders.	It’s the right thing to do.

Mozambican Context

- You should wear a mask in public places.
- We should study English to find better jobs.
- Children should go to school every day.

Find here [7 essential health verbs](#) to practice with the modal verbs.

Practice

Fill in the blanks with “should”:

1. You ___ eat vegetables every day.
2. We ___ help our classmates.
3. He ___ be at the meeting now.
4. I ___ call my mother tonight.
5. They ___ clean the classroom.

English Modal Verbs List: Affirmative / Negative / Question (with Should)

Type	Example
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Affirmative	You should study.
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Negative	You should not (shouldn't) study late.
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Question	Should you study now?
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Quick Tips

- Use **should** to give advice: “You should sleep early.”
- Use **shouldn't** to warn gently: “You shouldn't eat too much sugar.”
- Use **Should I...?** to ask for advice: “Should I go now?”

Audio Prompt Ideas

Record or read aloud slowly:

“You should study English every day.”

“Should I help you?”

“We should respect our elders.”

“He should be here soon.”

“You shouldn't forget your homework.”

The modal verb “Should” is one of the most practical examples for giving advice, making recommendations, and expressing expectations. Visit: "[How to Express Yourself in English](#)" to learn how to give advice, directions and make invitations.

English Modal Verbs List: Lesson 7: MAY

What does “may” mean?

May is used to:

- **Ask for permission (politely)**
- **Express possibility (more formal than “might”)**

Structure

Subject + **may** + base verb

- **May** I ask a question?
- It **may** rain later.
- You **may** leave now.

✓ No “to” after *may*

✓ No -s, -ing, or -ed endings

English Modal Verbs List in Context: “May”

Use	Example	Meaning
Permission	May I come in?	Am I allowed?
Possibility	It may be cold tomorrow. Maybe it will happen	

Mozambican Context

- **May I join the English class today?**
- **You may find bread at the market.**
- **It may rain in Gurúè this afternoon.**

Practice

Fill in the blanks with “May”:

1. ___ I borrow your pen?
2. It ___ be hot tomorrow.

3. You ___ leave after the test.
4. ___ I speak to the teacher?
5. We ___ visit the museum next week.

English Modal Verbs List: Affirmative / Negative / Question with “May”

Type **Example**

Affirmative You may go.

Negative You **may not** go.

Question May I go?

Learn also [7 emotional and mental verbs](#)

Quick Tips

- Use **may** to sound polite and respectful.
- Use **may not** to deny permission gently.
- Use **May I...?** when speaking to teachers, elders, or in formal settings.

Audio Prompt Ideas

Record or read aloud slowly:

“May I come in?”

“You may leave now.”

“It may rain today.”

“May I ask a question?”

“We may visit the market.”

Use the modal verb “May” to ask for permission and to express possibility in a respectful way.

English Modal Verbs List Lesson 8: MIGHT

What does “might” mean?

Might is used to:

- Express possibility (less certain than “may”)
- Talk about things that could happen, but we’re not sure

Structure

Subject + might + base verb

- It **might** rain later.
- She **might** come to class.
- I **might** study tonight.

✓ No “to” after *might*

✓ No -s, -ing, or -ed endings

English Modal Verbs List in Context: “Might”

Use	Example	Meaning
Possibility	He might be late.	Maybe he will arrive late.
Uncertainty	I might go to the market. I’m not sure yet.	
Suggestion (soft)	You might want to rest. It’s a gentle idea.	

Mozambican Context

- It **might** rain in Gurúè this afternoon.
- I **might** visit my cousin in Quelimane.
- She **might** sell bread tomorrow.

Practice

Fill in the blanks with “might”:

1. I ___ go to the church event.
2. He ___ be at home now.
3. We ___ eat bread and salad for dinner.
4. She ___ call you later.
5. It ___ be cold tomorrow.

English modal verbs list: Affirmative / Negative / Question with “Might”

Type **Example**

Affirmative I might dance.

Negative I **might not** dance.

Question Might I dance? (*rare, formal*)

Quick Tips

- Use **might** when you're not sure: "I might go."
- Use **might not** to show doubt: "He might not come."
- Use **might** to speak gently: "You might want to rest."

Audio Prompt Ideas

Record or read aloud slowly:

"I might study English tonight."

"She might come to class."

"It might rain this afternoon."

"We might visit the market."

"He might not be home."

The modal verb "Might" - in the examples provided in this lesson shows you how to express uncertainty. It can also be used to express possibility in a softer, more cautious way.

English Modal Verbs List Lesson 9: MUST

What does "must" mean?

Must is used to:

- Express strong obligation or necessity
- Give rules or instructions
- Show something is very important or required

Structure

Subject + **must** + base verb

- You **must** wear a helmet.
- We **must** study for the test.
- I **must** call my mother.

✓ No "to" after *must*

✓ No -s, -ing, or -ed endings

English Modal Verbs List in Context: "Must"

Use	Example	Meaning
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Use	Example	Meaning
Obligation	You must go to school.	It's necessary.
Rule	Visitors must sign in.	It's the law or policy.
Urgency	I must finish this today.	It's very important.

Learn here [top 11 essential English verbs](#) for more practices

Mozambican Context

- You must wear a mask in public transport.
- We must respect our elders.
- Students must arrive before 7:30.

Practice

Fill in the blanks with “must”:

1. You ___ wash your hands before eating.
2. We ___ finish the homework today.
3. I ___ speak to the teacher.
4. Children ___ go to school.
5. Visitors ___ show their ID.

English Modal Verbs List: Affirmative / Negative / Question with “Must”

Type	Example
Affirmative	You must study.
Negative	You must not (mustn't) cheat.
Question	Must I study?

Quick Tips

- Use **must** for strong advice or rules: “You must be careful.”
- Use **mustn't** to say something is not allowed: “You mustn't smoke here.”
- Use **Must I...?** to ask if something is required.

Audio Prompt Ideas

Record or read aloud slowly:

“You must study English every day.”
“We must respect our elders.”
“Must I wear a uniform?”
“You mustn’t forget your homework.”
“I must call my mother.”

Conclusion

What next, now that you've covered all the 9 modal verbs in English with examples structured under [English grammar essentials](#)? — Start practicing using the newly vocabulary you learned. By practicing you’ll build confidence.