


Modals

- Modals are helping verbs
- Used with the base form of the verb, modals create verbal phrases.
- Modals do not change form.
- Modals never end in “s” even in 3rd person singular
- Use “not” to make modal verbs negative.
- Don’t use double modals.
- Modals lack past tense forms, except **could** and **would** which serve as the past of **can** and **will**.

can	may	shall	will
could	might	should	would
	must		

Can	<p>present ability – I <i>can</i> ride a bike. opportunity – She <i>can</i> help you learn to ride a bike, when she is finished studying. permission – <i>Can</i> I try to ride the bike now? possibility and conditional – Anyone <i>can</i> learn to ride a bike, <i>if</i> they are not afraid to try. request – <i>Can</i> you teach me to ride a bike? willingness – I <i>can</i> teach you.</p>	
Could	<p>past ability – I <i>could</i> ride a bike when I was younger. conditional – He <i>could</i> learn to ride a two wheeler, <i>if</i> his father removes the training wheels. possibility – Bill <i>could</i> be the best bike rider with some more practice. suggestion – Mark <i>could</i> ride his bike to campus, instead of driving his car. request – <i>Could</i> I use your bike?</p>	
May	<p>polite request or permission – <i>May</i> I borrow your bike? possibility – He <i>may</i> be able to help you assemble the bike tomorrow.</p>	
Might	<p>possibility, but not certainty – I <i>might</i> be able to let you borrow the bike, after I put air in the tires. conditional – This bike <i>might</i> be a good choice for cross country riding, <i>if</i> the seat is comfortable. suggestion – You <i>might</i> want to lower the seat, so that your legs reach the pedals.</p>	
Must	<p>strong obligation – You <i>must</i> return the bike, if you use it. necessity – I <i>must</i> ride my bike to get my exercise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitute must with “have to” – You <i>have to</i> return the bike, if you use it. 	
Shall	<p>formal invitation and future action. – <i>Shall</i> we go bike riding together tomorrow?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • British English 	
Should	<p>mild obligation, recommendation, advice – You <i>should</i> wear a helmet when you ride a bike. expectation – He <i>should</i> finish the race around noon.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substitute should with “ought to” – You <i>ought to</i> wear a helmet when you ride a bike. 	
Will	<p>future intent – I <i>will</i> go riding on Saturday. promise – We <i>will</i> definitely make time to ride together next weekend. prediction – The weatherman, however, reports that the winds <i>will</i> be strong. voluntary action – I <i>will</i> go anyway.</p>	
Would	<p>conditional – I <i>would</i> ride the bike at night, <i>if</i> it had a light. past of will – He <i>would</i> ride his bike before he hurt his knee.</p>	

Use the base form of the word with the modal. Modals do not change form.

- He could **ride** for long distances. (correct) He could **rode** for long distances. (incorrect)

Modals never end in “s” even in the third person singular.

- She **should** peddle slower. (correct) She **shoulds** peddles slower. (incorrect)

Combine the base form of the verb with the modals – not with the infinitive “to.”

- He should ride with traffic. (correct) He should to ride with traffic. (incorrect)

Use “not” to make modal verbs negative.

- I **cannot** ride a bike.
- I **could not** ride a bike because I was afraid of falling.
- I **may not** be riding next weekend because I have to work extra hours.
- She **might not** wear a helmet, but she is careful when she rides.
- Bike riders under 17 years of age **must not** ride without helmets in Pennsylvania.
- Riders **shall not** break the traffic rules that apply to cars.
- When using hand signals to indicate turning, riders **should not** use their right arm.
- He **will not** go riding when it rains.
- The bike club **would not** participate in the race because they objected to the high entrance fee.

To form questions:

- **Can** I teach you how to ride a bike?
- **Should** we ask your mother first?
- **Might** it help if I let her know that you’ll be wearing a helmet?
- **Will** you let me take the training wheels off?

Do not use double modals.

- He **could can** fix the flat tire.
- I **will might** enter the bicycle challenge marathon.

Practice: Circle the best modal.

- He **can/ would** ride his bike when his car broke down.
- Bob **should not/ may not** ride down the middle of the busy road.
- **Might you/ could you** repair my broken wheel?
- My mother always said, “You **could/ought to** wear a helmet to protect your head.”
- **May/ can** I borrow your bike?
- **Can you/ will you** go riding in the park with us on Sunday?
- I **have to/ can** return the bike to the rental shop by 5 o’clock this evening.
- **Shall/ should we** take a tire patch kit with us to make repairs?