

MODALS

These words are special because they generally express a speakers' attitude. For example, they can express that a speaker feels something is **NECESSARY, ADVISABLE, PERMISSIBLE, POSSIBLE OR PROBABLE**, moreover, they can show the strength of those attitudes. You use these words with a verb, they don't work on their own. Here are some important differences:

- Apart from "HAVE TO" generally, modal verbs do not use a "-s" in the third person. For example:
 - He **CAN SPEAK** Chinese.
- Apart from "will", you use "not" to make modal verbs negative. For example:
 - He **SHOULD NOT** be late.
- Many modal verbs can't be used in the past tenses or the future tenses. For example:
 - ~~She **MUSTED** study very hard.~~
- Unfortunately each modal has more than one meaning.
- Apart from "HAVE & OUGHT TO" you never use 'to' with a modal. For example, "**CAN TO**" + the verb.

OBLIGATION:

HAVE TO = certainty, legal obligation or an obligation from someone else, and necessity. In the negative we use it to say that something is unnecessary.

MUST = certainty, logically necessary, obligation from the speaker's perspective, necessity, prohibition, and strong recommendation. In the negative, expresses complete prohibition and is therefore stronger than 'don't have to'.

ADVICE / RECOMMENDATIONS, ETC:

OUGHT TO = recommendations, advice, expectations and assumptions.

SHOULD = recommendations, advice, conditionals, expectations, opinions, obligations, questions when we don't know what to do.

ABILITY, PERMISSION, ETC:

CAN = ability, informal permission, opportunity, possibility and requests.

COULD = past ability, conditionals, polite requests, possibility, requests and suggestions.

POSSIBILITY, PERMISSION, ETC:

MAY = permission, polite requests, and possibility,

MIGHT = conditionals, formal requests (rare), permission, possibility and suggestions.

OTHER:

SHALL = future, inevitability, promise, questions, decisions, instructions, offers and suggestions, and requests.

WILL = intentions, polite requests (rare), predictions, promises, and voluntary actions.

WOULD = conditional, past of will, polite request, preference and repetition in the past.