**Modal verbs**

Often the same modal verb is used to express different meanings.

| meaning | which verb? | example |
| --- | --- | --- |
| really certain | *will* | *My birthday****will****be on a Monday this year.* |
| *won’t* | *I****won’t****have a party.* |
| *shall* | *I****shall****have plenty to tell you when I see you.* |
| *shan’t* | *I****shan’t****ask you to come again.* |
| *must* | *The cakes****must****be ready soon. They’ve been in the oven for an hour.* |
| *can’t* | *You****can’t****be hungry. You had a huge lunch.* |
| very likely | *should* | *The traffic isn’t heavy. We****should****be there in an hour.* |
| *ought to* | *The traffic isn’t heavy. We****ought to****be there in an hour.* |
| possible | *may* | *She****may****be a friend of Richard’s.* |
| *might* | *She****might****be a friend of Richard’s.* |
| *could* | *She****could****be a friend of Richard’s.* |
| strong obligation | *must* | *You****must****arrive at 6 to pick up the tickets.* |
| *have to* | *I****have to****go up to the hospital twice a week.* |
| *need to* | *We****need to****win this game to get into the final.* |
| weak obligation | *should* | *Children****should****look after their parents in old age.* |
| *ought to* | *Children****ought to****look after their parents in old age.* |
| no obligation | *needn’t* | *I****needn’t****do it now. I’ll do it later.* |
| *don’t need to* | *I****don’t need to****do it now. I’ll do it later.* |
| *don’t have to* | *I****don’t have to****do it now. I’ll do it later.* |
| permission | *can* | ***Can****we go out now?*  *You****can****go now if you’ve finished.* |
| *may* | *You****may****go now if you’ve finished.*  ***May****I borrow a chair?* |
| *could* | ***Could****we borrow the car?* |
| *might* | ***Might****we have a little more time to finish the exam?* (very formal) |
| no permission | *can’t* | *You****can’t****go in without a ticket.* |
| *may not* | *You****may not****enter while the exam is in progress.* (formal) |
| *must not* | *You****must not****leave your bike in front of the fire exit.* |
| offer | *will* | *I****’ll****get it. You stay there.* |
| *shall* | ***Shall****I go and make dinner?* |
| request | *will* | ***Will****you close that door?* |
| *would* | ***Would****you close that door?* |
| *could* | ***Could****you help me with this?* |
| promise | *will* | *I’****ll****come back before 6.* |
| decision | *will* | *I think****I’ll****eat later. I’m not hungry now.* |
| advice and suggestion | *should* | *You****should****apply for that job.* |
| ability | *can* | ***Can****you swim underwater?* |
| *could* | *I****could****play much better ten years ago.* |
| general truth | *can* | *Too much exercise****can****be bad for you.* |
| *may* | *A list of verbs****may****be found at the back of the book.* |