

Modal verbs – survey

MUST – muset opis – HAVE TO

I have to,
I have (got) to musím, vnější nutnost

I must do it musím to udělat (moje rozhodnutí)

I mustn't do it nesmím to dělat!

I needn't do it nemusím to dělat

S MIN: INFINITIVEM: I needn't have done it nemusel jsem to dělat, bylo to zbytečné /I needn't have gone to the shop. It was closed/

I don't need to do it nemám zapotřebí, nemusím to dělat

I don't have to do it nemusím to dělat

Vyjádření JISTOTY: must =určitě

He must know on určitě ví

S MIN INFINITIVEM : He must have known on určitě věděl

CAN – moci opis – BE ABLE TO
Podmínka COULD – mohl, mohl by

I can do it můžu, umím to udělat

I can't do it nemůžu, neumím to udělat

Vyjádření JISTOTY: can= možná
Could= možná
Can't = určitě ne

He can't know určitě neví

S MIN INFINITIVEM : He can't have known určitě nevěděl
He couldn't have known nemohl to vědět /pouhá konstatace/

MAY – smět opis BE ALLOWED TO
Podmínka might směl bych, možná bych

I may do it smím to udělat

I may not do it nesmím to udělat /hlavně jako odpověď na :May I? – No, you may not/

Vyjádření JISTOTY may = možná, might = možná, snad
May not = možná ne

He may know – možná ví

He may not know možná neví

S MIN INFINITIVEM He may have known možná věděl
He may not have known možná nevěděl

Notice the difference in meaning between can and may/might/could:

That dog can be dangerous.
(= Sometimes that dog is dangerous. I know.)

That dog may/might/could be dangerous.
(= Perhaps that dog is dangerous. I don't know.)

SHOULD /OUGHT TO/ = měl bych I should do it – měl bych to udělat
SHOULD/OUGHT TO/ + MIN INFINITIV = měl jsem I should have done it – měl jsem to udělat

NOTES: We can use “had better” instead of should/ought to, especially in spoken English.
We'd better /should/ought to call the police.

Will and its conditional/past tense would are also used as modal verbs. They express willingness, promises, offers, requests.

Will you help me, please?

I'll give you a lift home after the party.

Consider, if you will, the position of women in Afghanistan.

The baby wouldn't go to sleep.

Would you please be quiet?

“I would rather” expresses your preferences:

I don't want another drink. I would rather go home.

We use I would think, I would imagine, I'd guess to give an opinion when we are not sure or when we want to be polite:

It's very difficult, I would imagine.

I would think that's the right answer.

We can use would to talk about repeated past actions that don't happen any more.

Every Saturday I would go on a long bike ride.

My dad would read me amazing stories every night at bedtime.

would for past habits is slightly more formal than used to. It is often used in stories. We don't normally use the negative or question form of would for past habits.

Can, could, be able to, should:

Can is often used with the verbs of sensual perception: hear, see, smell, taste, feel, + remember, understand:

We could see the lake. I could smell gas. We couldn't hear very well.

We use could for general ability, for specific situation of in the meaning of manage, we use was/were able to:

My grandfather could speak 5 languages.

Fortunately everybody was able/managed to escape. We were able/managed to find the exit.

We use could in the meaning of may/might (=possibility):

The story could/may/might be true.

We use should + present infinitive to express what is a good thing to do – advice, opinion:

The government should do more to reduce crime.

We use should + past infinitive to express that something wasn't done, but it would have been the right thing to do:

I wonder why they are so late. They should have arrived long ago.