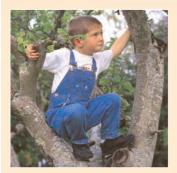
UNIT 5 Modal Verbs

The verbs can, could, may, might, must, will, would, shall, should and ought are modal verbs. They do not take a suffix (-s, -ing or -ed). e.g. He should stay here. They are followed by a bare infinitive, except for ought which is followed by a to-infinitive. e.g. They may come tonight. You ought to get a job. They go before

Ability (Can-Could-Be able to)



He **was able to** climb up the tree.

Can is used in the present and future. *Could* is the past tense of *can*. We use be able to to form all the other tenses.

- Can = be able to ability in the present e.g. Tom can play the guitar.
- will be able to ability in the future
 e.g. When you graduate, you will be able to get a job.
 But we use can when we decide now about something we will do in the near future.
 - e.g. I haven't got any money now, but I **can** pay you tomorrow. (= I decide now about something I will do tomorrow.)
- Could = used to be able to ability in the past (repeated past action) We can use was/were able to with no difference in meaning.

e.g. I could/was able to run fast when I was young.

- was/were able to = managed to do ability in the past (single past action)
 We use was/were able to to show that someone had the ability to do something in a particular situation in the past.
 - e.g. Although it was dark, he was able to find his way.
- We normally use could with the verbs see, hear, smell, taste, feel, understand, guess and remember.
 e.g. She listened carefully and she could hear people talking in the next room. (NOT: ... she was able to hear ...)
- In negations we can use couldn't or wasn't/ weren't able to with no difference in meaning. e.g. I couldn't/wasn't able to reach him on the phone.

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the subject in questions and are followed by not in negations. e.g. Can I say something? I couldn't understand him. Modal verbs do not usually have tenses. They can refer to the present or the future. e.g. I must go now. (present) You must call me early tomorrow morning. (future)

Obligation/Duty/Necessity (Must-Have to-Should/Ought-Need)



Everyone **should** recycle their rubbish.

We use *must* to refer to the present or future.

- must = it is your duty/you are obliged to do sth e.g. You must listen to your teacher.
- have to = it is necessary to do sth e.g. We have to be at the airport at 9 o'clock.

We use *must* when the speaker decides that something is necessary. We use *have to* when somebody else other than the speaker has made the decision.

e.g. I **must** finish the report by tomorrow. (The speaker decides.)

I have to finish the report by tomorrow. (Somebody else has made the decision.)

- Must and have to have different meanings in questions.
 - e.g. Must I tidy my room? (= Do you insist that I tidy
 my room?)

Do I have to tidy my room? (= Is it necessary for me to tidy my room?)

- Have got to has the same meaning as have to, and is often used in everyday speech.
 - e.g. 'I've got to phone Mum tonight.'
- We use have to when we need to use other tenses. e.g. We had to call for the doctor when Aunt Lucy fainted last night.
- should/ought (less emphatic than must) Should and ought express duty.
 - e.g. People **should** take/**ought** to take better care of the environment.
- need = it is necessary to e.g. Need | talk to the boss right away?