

## MODALS

The same modal verb can be used in different ways, and with different meanings. We only know the meaning from the situation. For example, **could**:

*I could get to work in 30 minutes in my last job.* (ability: past time)  
*Could you pass the salt, please?* (request: present time)  
*That could be difficult.* (uncertainty: future time)

### ABILITY

- **Can - can't/ cannot** **to be able to**  
*Can you deliver in two weeks? - No, we can't.*

### PAST ABILITY

- **Could** describes past ability  
*When I was young I could run very fast.*
- **Was able to** describes the ability to successfully complete an action.  
*Marry was able to help us.* (She actually helped us)  
*Marry could help us.* (But perhaps she didn't)

### WILL

- When will expresses the idea of "willingness" - such as in requests and offerings, it can be used as a modal verb  
*Will you hold the lift for me, please?*  
*Will you have some more coffee?*

### NECESSITY (OBLIGATION)

- To say that something is necessary we use **have to**, **need to** and **must**.  
*We must finish the meeting by eleven at the latest.*
- To make a question, we avoid using **must** as we can sound annoyed then.  
*Do you have to/ need to work this evening? x Must you work this evening?*

### PAST NECESSITY

- **had to** and **needed to**

### NO NECESSITY, PERMISSION, PROHIBITION

- When something is not necessary we use **don't have to** and **don't need to**  
*You don't have to pay right now, we can give you credit.*
- When something is permitted we use **can** and **be allowed to**. When something is prohibited we use **can't**, **be not allowed to** and **mustn't**.  
**Mustn't** is more usual when telling someone what not to do.  
*You're not allowed to park on a double yellow line.* (that's the law)  
*You mustn't talk about politics if they invite you to dinner.* (I'm telling you)

- Notice that **have to** and **must** have similar meanings in their affirmative forms but **different meanings in their negative forms.**

*I have to/ must leave now.* (it is necessary for me to leave)

*I don't have to leave.* (it is not necessary, I have a choice whether to leave)

*I mustn't leave now.* (it is prohibited, I cannot leave)

## NO NECESSITY, PERMISSION AND PROHIBITION IN THE PAST

- No necessity - *didn't have to* and *didn't need to*.
- Permission - *could, was allowed*
- Prohibition - *couldn't, wasn't allowed to*

## OPINIONS AND ADVICE

- To give an opinion, advice or recommendation about what is the best thing to do we use **should, should not, ought to** and **ought not**.

*You should speak to your boss.*

- **Had better (not)** is used for strong options. Had is usually contracted.

*You'd better not interrupt him while he is on the phone.*

- When we use these verbs in the past (+ have + past participle) we mean that we didn't do the right thing and now we are making a criticism.

*We shouldn't have spent all the advertising budget on television spots.*

## CERTAINTY AND UNCERTAINTY

100 % *will, be certain to*

95% *must, can't*

80% *should, ought to, be likely to, shouldn't, ought not to, be unlikely to*

30-70% *might, may, could, may not, might not*

0% *won't*

## PAST CERTAINTY AND UNCERTAINTY

- **Must have** and **can't have** - these are used to make deductions about past actions. The have form does not change.

*I must have left my wallet in the car.*

*Jim can't have noticed you.*

- **May have, might have** and **could have** - these express possibility and uncertainty about past actions. The have form does not change.

*He may not have received the letter.*

*You could have been killed.*

### REMEMBER:

*Must  
Needn't*

*muset  
nemuset*

*May, be allowed to  
Mustn't*

*smět  
nesmět*