

[GRAMMAR] Modal Auxiliaries

Les auxiliaires de mode servent à exprimer des nuances comme la capacité, la probabilité, etc. Ils sont suivis de l'infinitif sans to.

POUVOIR	être capable de (= capacité)	être autorisé à (= permission)	il est possible que (= possibilité)
Présent "peut"	can(n't)	can(n't) may (not) = formal	can = for general statements can't / cannot = impossible
	<i>I can't find my keys.</i>	<i>Can I leave?</i> [formal] <i>May I open the window?</i>	could(n't) may (not) might (not) } = possible
Conditionne l présent "pourrait"	could(n't)		could/may/might have + pp. = guess about the past could/may/might not have + pp = impossible past event
	<i>If the weather was better, we could go for a walk.</i>	[formal] <i>Could I open the window?</i> /!\ Requests: Could / Would you take a message, please? [less polite] Will / Can you carry this for me, please?	<i>It can be very cold here in winter.</i> <i>The teacher could/may/might come in at any time.</i> <i>Where's your sister? -- She could/may/might have gone to the library.</i> <i>They know the way here. They can't have got lost!</i>
Passé "pouvait"	could(n't)		
	<i>When I was young, I couldn't swim.</i>	<i>As a child, I couldn't watch TV at night.</i>	<i>I was a child, it could be very cold in Winter.</i>
Conditionne l passé "aurait pu"	could(n't) have + pp		
	<i>If you had been free, you could have come with me.</i>	<i>If you had behaved better, you could have played with the others.</i>	<i>Are you crazy? You could have been hurt!</i>
Tous les autres temps NO MODALS!	[be able to]	[be allowed to]	[...]
	<i>If I save enough money, I'll be able to buy a house.</i> <i>I want to be able to do it by myself.</i>	<i>I won't be allowed to take the oral exam.</i> <i>Being allowed to vote at 16 is a much-needed change.</i>	Pour le futur: = conditionnel (<i>could, may, might</i>) Pour l'infinitif: trouver une périphrase (<i>the probability of him being on time is very low</i>)

DEVOIR	= obligation (ou interdiction) / instructions / nécessité / conseil / reproche	= déduction
"doit"	must(n't) have to (don't have to) need to (don't need to) ¹	must (- can't) = we're sure something is true
	[obligation] <i>I have to pay taxes.</i> [interdiction] <i>You must not be late.</i> [pas nécessaire] <i>You needn't hurry.</i>	<i>He hasn't slept all night; he must be tired, and can't be in a good mood.</i>
"devrait"	should(n't) / ought (not) to	
	[conseil] <i>You should follow your agent's advice.</i> <i>Do you think I ought to apply for this job?</i> <i>Jack ought not to go to bed so late.</i>	<i>If he leaves now, he should (or ought to) be there by noon.</i>
"aurait dû"	should(n't) have + pp	
	[reproche] <i>You shouldn't have done that.</i> <i>It was a great party. You ought to have come.</i>	<i>It's nearly eleven o'clock. They should have arrived by now.</i>
"a dû"	Had to (- Couldn't)	
	<i>Everyone had to bring something to eat.</i> <i>You couldn't make any noise in the library.</i>	<i>She didn't answer. She must have been sleeping.</i> <i>I reminded him twice. He can't have forgotten.</i>
Tous les autres temps	["have to" conjugué]	
	<i>Last year I had to take the train every day.</i> <i>If you invest now, you won't need to worry when you're old.</i> <i>I'm too young to have to choose between my mom and my dad.</i> <i>The best part about living with your parents is not having to pay rent.</i>	

¹ **must** = obligation imposée par la personne qui parle ≠ **have to** = obligation venant d'extérieur
mustn't = interdiction ≠ **do(es)n't have/need to, needn't** = pas nécessaire
didn't need to = ce n'était pas nécessaire ≠ **needn't have to** = c'est fait mais ce n'était pas nécessaire

Modal Auxiliaries: Exercises

1. Ability (A1)

Fill in with the right modal to express ability or lack of ability.

It's too dark. I _____ see anything.

I _____ do this work for tomorrow!

He _____ walk since his 1st birthday.

One year ago, he _____ speak English, but now he manages quite well.

I would like _____ speak English perfectly.

2. Obligation (A2)

Complete the sentence by making up rules:

When John was in the army, he...

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-
-
-

Now John has finished his military service. What has changed? He...

-
-
-
-

Interdiction or lack of obligation? (B2)

You _____ speak with your neighbor during an exam.

You _____ hurry: there's plenty of time left.

He has a good memory, so he _____ study a lot to succeed.

You _____ tell her: it's a surprise!

It's a direct train, so we _____ change.

3. Permission (A1)

What can you ask the teacher during an exam?

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-
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4. Advice / reproaches and regrets (A2)

What would you advise to someone who wants to study English?

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-
-

John failed his exam. What would his mother say?

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-
-
-

5. Probability (B1)

Maria is late. What could be the reason?

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-
-

Maria didn't come to the party yesterday. What could have happened?

-
-
-

6. Deduction (B1-B2)

Fill in with the appropriate modal.

John has been working non-stop since this morning. → He _____ (be) tired!

Maria ate a huge meal for lunch. → She _____ (be) hungry already.

I found a baby bird at the foot of a tree. → It _____ (fall) from a nest.

He got 0/20 for the vocabulary test. → He _____ (study) enough!

7. All modals

Say in other words, using a modal verb or alternative.

It's forbidden to walk on the grass. → You _____

We will perhaps invite them. → We _____

It isn't necessary to water the flowers. → You _____

You will be obliged to tell her. → You _____

I advise you to take your umbrella. → You _____

It is vital to wear a helmet when you ride a motorbike. → You _____

It is very impolite to speak to him like that. → You _____

I think it was a bad idea to drive so quickly. → You _____

I finally managed to reach him. → I _____

Translate

1. Tu devras te débrouiller tout seul.
2. Hier, nous avons dû appeler le médecin.
3. Tu devrais faire des efforts.
4. Je n'aurais pas dû manger autant.
5. Il se peut qu'ils arrivent un peu en retard.
6. Elle pourrait avoir oublié de venir.
7. (C'est bizarre qu'elle ne soit plus là.) Elle a dû partir plus tôt !
8. Hier, elle a dû partir plus tôt car les trains étaient en grève.
9. Il a dû se faire du souci.
10. C'est ennuyant de devoir étudier tout cela.