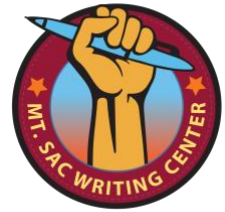


The Writing Center

DLA: Modals



This DLA is a writable PDF form. You can enter your answers directly into this document.

YOU MUST DOWNLOAD AND SAVE THIS FILE TO YOUR COMPUTER.

Do not complete this form in a web browser. You will not be able to save your work.

Student Name:

Important Note

To get completion credit for this DLA, make sure you complete all the required activities. If you'd like help while working on a specific DLA, you can meet with a specialist at the Writing Center. Keep in mind that you might need to schedule a second appointment to review your work, check your understanding, and get your completion credit. You can only review **ONE** DLA per appointment. (Check the last section of this DLA for information on making your appointment and receiving completion credit for your work).

Activities (approximately 1 hour)

Read the information, complete the activities that follow, and be prepared to discuss your answers when you meet with a tutor.

Understanding Modals

A modal is an auxiliary (helping) verb that expresses ideas related to degrees of certainty, obligations, social functions, or ability. They do not have meaning by themselves. Rather, they give a main verb a different meaning. Simple modals are generally used to talk about the present or future (exceptions: *could* for past ability and *had to* for past necessity), while perfect modals are used to talk about the past.

Simple Modals and Their Meanings

Modal	Meaning	Example
may	polite request	May I borrow your pencil?
	formal permission	You may leave the room.
	assumption (less than 50% certainty)	John may be at the library right now.
	future possibility	It may rain tomorrow.
might	assumption (less than 50% certainty)	John might not be home right now.
	future possibility	We might have a quiz next week.
should	advice	You should ask the teacher for help.
	expectation	This program should work.
ought to	advice	The students ought to attend this workshop.
ought to	expectation	If you studied, you ought to do well on the test.
had better	advice with threat of bad result	You had better get tutoring, or you will fail the class and have to repeat it.
must	strong necessity	You must display your parking permit.
	prohibition (negative only)	Students must not talk during the test.
	assumption (95%+ certainty)	She drives a Porsche. She must be rich.
have (got) to	necessity	You have (got) to turn in your work on time.
	past necessity (<i>had to</i>)	I had to leave early yesterday because of work.
	assumption (90% certainty)	This has (got) to be the right way. I remember it.
	not necessary (negative only)	You don't have to bring your books on Monday.

Modal	Meaning	Example
can	ability/possibility	I can drive manual transmission.
	informal polite request	Can I borrow your pencil?
	informal permission	You can use my book if you want.
	impossibility (negative only)	This can't be the right way! I think we're lost.
	informal prohibition (negative only)	Students can't talk during the test.
	inability (negative only)	I can't reach the top shelf because I'm too short.
could	past ability	I could run fast when I was a child.
	polite request	Could I borrow your pencil?
	assumption (less than 50% certainty)	The teacher's absent. He could be sick.
	future possibility	It could rain tomorrow.
	impossibility (negative only)	This couldn't be the right way. I think we're lost.
would	polite request	Would you please pass the salt?
	past habit	We would go to the park every week as children.
would	desire/intent (unreal conditionals)	If I had money, I would travel around the world.
shall	polite suggestion	Shall we dance?
	future	I shall arrive soon.
will	predictions	Someday, robots will rule the world.
	voluntary actions	<i>*phone rings*</i> I'll get it!
	promises	I'll pay you back.
	invitations/requests	Will you come to my party?
be able to	ability (can be used in any tense)	I'm sorry that I wasn't able to come to your party, but I had to work.

How to Form Verbs with Simple Modals: modal + BASE form of the verb

Modal verbs are special verbs which behave very differently from normal verbs. Here are some rules to remember:

1. Modals do not take -s in the third person. *Exception: *have (got) to* She *has to go*.
 - Tom *must take* a break.
 - Elise *should see* the counselor.
2. Several modal verbs cannot be used in the past tenses or the future tenses.
 - She ~~will can~~ *give* us a ride to the airport tomorrow.
 - He ~~must~~ *leave* early yesterday.
3. Most modals are followed by **only the base form** of the verb and are **not used alone** unless there is a clear connection to a main verb. Example □ *Will you take me?* Yes, I *will*.
 - Bill *could saw* see the fireworks from his bedroom window.
 - Hillary *should [save]* her money.
4. Do not use *to* unnecessarily: *Exceptions: *ought to, have (got) to, be able to*
 - We *had better to leave* now.
5. Do not use double modals: *Exceptions: *be able to* You *won't be able to register*.
 - She *might can help* me.

Perfect Modals and their Meanings

Modal	Meaning	Example
may have	-past possibility (not certain)	John may have been at the library yesterday. He wasn't home when I called him.
might have	-past possibility (not certain)	John might have been at the library yesterday. He wasn't home when I called him.
	-blame/complaint	The event was cancelled. You might have called me.
	-possible result of unreal situation	If they had invited me, I might have gone .
should have	-regret	You should have asked the teacher for help.
	-past expectation	I studied, so I should have passed the test.
ought to have	-regret	You ought to have studied for the test.
	-past expectation	I studied, so I ought to have passed the test.
must have	-assumption about the past (certain)	Heidi must not have felt very good yesterday. She didn't show up to work.
had to have	-assumption about the past (certain)	Heidi had to have been sick yesterday. She didn't show up to work.
could have	-past suggestion	You could have talked to your professor.
	-past possibility (not certain)	John could have been at the library yesterday.
	-past impossibility (negative only)	He couldn't have eaten the whole pizza by himself.
	-possible result of past unreal situation	If you had called me earlier, I could've given you a ride to the airport.
would have	-certain result of past unreal situation	I would have made you a sandwich if I had known you were hungry.

How to Form Verbs with Perfect Modals: modal + HAVE + past participle

Example: I **should have taken** that class earlier.

Do not use the past form of the verb. You need to use the past participle, which sometimes looks like the past form, but other times it does not. Here are some verbs and their past participles:

Simple Form	Past Participle	Simple Form	Past Participle	Simple Form	Past Participle
awake	awoken	get	gotten	see	seen
be	been	give	given	sell	sold
become	become	go	gone	send	sent
begin	begun	grow	grown	sing	sung
blow	blown	have	had	sit	sat
break	broken	hear	heard	sleep	slept
buy	bought	keep	kept	speak	spoken
catch	caught	know	known	stand	stood
choose	chosen	lay	laid	steal	stolen
come	come	leave	left	sweep	swept
do	done	lie	lain	swim	swum
draw	drawn	lose	lost	take	taken
drink	drunk	make	made	teach	taught
drive	driven	mean	meant	tell	told
eat	eaten	meet	met	think	thought
fall	fallen	pay	paid	throw	thrown

Simple Form	Past Participle	Simple Form	Past Participle	Simple Form	Past Participle
feel	felt	ride	ridden	understand	understood
find	found	rise	risen	wear	worn
fly	flown	run	run	win	won
forget	forgotten	say	said	write	written

How to Make Questions and Negative Statements

Negative statements: Start with the subject, then the *modal*, followed by **not**, and then the *rest of the verb*.

I will *pay* you back.

We should *go*.

She must *have seen* me.

I will **not** *pay* you back.

We should **not** *go*.

She must **not** *have seen* me.

Questions: Start with the modal, then the subject, and then the *rest of the verb*. You can add a **wh-** word at the beginning if you need it.

She *must finish* the project.

I should *attend*

They *could have returned* the key.

Must she *finish* the project?

Should I *attend*?

Could they *have returned* the key?

Why *must* she *finish* it?

Which *should* I *attend*?

How *could* they *have returned* it?

* *Have (got) to* agrees with the subject and needs a helper for questions and negative statements.

I *have (got) to go*.

He *has to go*.

We *have to go*.

I **do not** *have (got) to go*.

He **does not** *have to go*.

We **do not** *have to go*.

Do I *have to go*?

Does he *have to go*?

Do we *have to go*?

Where **do** I *have to go*?

Why **does** he *have to go*?

When **do** we *have to go*?

Other Modals

Modal verbs can be used in a variety of different forms. There are progressive modals (*You should be studying right now.*), perfect progressive modals (*You should have been studying instead of watching TV.*), and even passive modals (*Precaution should be taken.*), among others.

Activities

Check off each box once you have completed the activity.

☐ 1. Modals Review

Review the information on this sheet. Then, answer the following questions.

What are modals?

List three rules about modals.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

□ 2. *Online Quiz*

Go to <http://tinyurl.com/modalsexpressionsdlaquiz> and take the DLA quiz. You must score at least 75% on the quiz before meeting with a specialist. After you complete the task, please take a screenshot of the page that has your score and show it to your specialist. Do not exit the quiz until you take the screenshot.

Choose 3a or 3b Below

□ 3a. *Correct Your Own Writing*

Collect some of your graded work. Find FIVE different sentences that have modal errors. Write them down below and then write the corrected sentence with the appropriate adjective below the original sentence.

Example

- *Original sentence:* John must left early yesterday.
- *Corrected sentence:* John had to leave early yesterday.

1a. Original Sentence

1b. Corrected Sentence

2a. Original Sentence

2b. Corrected Sentence

3a. Original Sentence

3b. Corrected Sentence

4a. Original Sentence

4b. Corrected Sentence

5a. Original Sentence

5b. Corrected Sentence

If you do not have your own essay to work with, please complete the supplemental activity below (3b).

□ **3b. Write Your Own Sentences**

Make sentences using the following modals correctly.

1. must have (assumption about the past):

2. have got to (necessity):

3. ought to (advice):

4. could have (past suggestion):

5. may (future possibility):

6. might (assumption):

7. should (expectation):

8. should have (regret):

9. may have (past possibility):

10. ought to have (past expectation):

□ 4. Review the DLA/Receive Completion Credit

1. Go to [EAB Navigate](#) and make an appointment (online or in-person).
2. Attend your session and be prepared to explain your understanding of the information you've learned in the DLA. Consider the main concept you learned and how you might use this in your future assignments/classes.
3. If your professor asks you to provide proof, you can review the "appointment summary report" through EAB Navigate (app or desktop). You will find all Writing Center appointments under "appointment summary reports" (app or desktop). Look for the summary report for your DLA appointment. This is where your writing specialist will indicate the title of your DLA and state whether it is "completed" or "not completed." If it is marked as "not completed," book a follow up appointment to complete.

Note: Appointment summary reports are also sent weekly to your instructor on record. If there is an issue, please contact us at writingcenter@mtsac.edu or (909) 274-5325.

If you are an individual with a disability and need a greater level of accessibility for any document in The Writing Center or on The Writing Center's website, please contact the Mt. SAC Accessible Resource Centers for Students, access@mtsac.edu, (909) 274-4290.

Revised November 2025