

# Grammar

## Modals

Modals are the auxiliary verbs *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, ought to*, and *must*. Modals give further meaning to the main verb.

How **can** we **think** about franchising right now?

We **must** do something clever soon.

Modals do not change their form.

He **can travel** with my family if he wants to. (not ~~He cans travel ...~~.)

A rich partner **could bring** in the money needed for expansion. (not ~~A partner could to bring...~~)

## Ability

We use *can('t)* for present ability / inability and *could(n't)* for past ability / inability.

Bianca **can speak** Japanese but she **can't speak** Arabic.

The previous assistant manager **could state** the sales figures for the last 5 years, but she **couldn't remember** our names.

When we are talking about one specific occasion in the past we use *couldn't, was(n't) / were(n't) able to*. We do **not** use *could*.

He **was able to find** the bag. (not ~~He could find...~~)

We use *be able to* for ability / inability in all tenses.

We **are / were / have been / will be able to** hire efficient employees.

## Possibility

We use *can / can't, could / couldn't, may / may not, might / might not*, and *must* to indicate the degree of possibility that the information is true.

Almost certain	must
Possible	can, may, could, might
Unlikely	can't, couldn't

When we are almost certain that something is true (often based on the evidence), we use *must*.

I saw Wendell a few minutes ago. He **must be** here.

I hear you've been promoted recently. You **must be** very happy.

When we are almost certain about something in the past, we use *must + have + past participle*.

Pipa's jacket is gone. She **must have left**.

You **must have been** very happy when you had your baby.

When we think something is possible, we use *can, could, may, or might*.

We **could rent** the empty space next door.

There **may not be** enough space on your computer for all the data.

We **might hire** a private investigator if it's not too expensive.

**!** Use context to understand if can means possibility or ability.

**I can** drive. My father taught me how. (ability)

**Don't** worry if the bus is late. **I can** drive you. (possibility)

When we talk about possibility in the past, we use *could / may / might + have + past participle*.

We **could have rented** that space, but we decided that it wasn't the best option.

She **may have been** in touch with Matthew.

He **might have contacted** them on his mobile phone.

When we think something is unlikely, we use *can't* or *couldn't*.

You **can't be** hungry already. We just had a big breakfast. (not ~~You mustn't be~~ ....)

He **couldn't have** the key. I just saw it.

When we talk about something impossible in the past, we use *can't / couldn't + have + past participle*.

You **can't have eaten** all those marshmallows.

He **couldn't have taken** the folder. I had it with me.