

MODAL AUXILIARIES 2

GENERAL REMARKS

When the three auxiliary verbs *be*, *have* and *do* are used to make tenses, passives and questions, they have important grammatical functions but no real "dictionary meaning". There is another group of auxiliary verbs which generally have more "dictionary meaning". They are *may*, *might*, *can*, *could*, *must*, *will*, *would*, *shall*, *should*, *ought* and *need*. These verbs are often called *modal auxiliaries*. They have several points in common which make them quite different from other verbs.

1. They are not used (except sometimes in the negative) to talk about things which are definitely happening, or have definitely happened.

I can't swim.

She could be ill in London or Paris or Tokio -nobody knows.

I may come tomorrow if I have time.

You might have told me Frances was ill.

What would you do if you had a free year?

I think they should have consulted a doctor earlier.

2. Modal verbs have no -s on the third person singular; questions and negatives are made without *do*; they are followed by the *infinitive without to* of other verbs (except *ought*).

You needn't look at me like that.

Can your mother drive?

He must be here by nine o'clock.

That ought to be enough.

3. Modal verbs have no infinitives, and other expressions are used instead, when necessary.

*I'd like to be able to skate. (Not *...to can skate.).*

*You're going to have to work harder. (Not *...to must work harder.).*

4. Modal verbs have no past forms. *Could* and *would* are used with past meanings in some cases (but never to say that particular events actually happened on definite occasions.

After climbing for six hours, we managed to reach the top. (not could)

I had to go to Chester yesterday.

5. Modal verbs can be used with perfect infinitives to talk about things which did not happen, or which we are not sure about, in the past.

*You **should have told** me at once.
Her car **may have broken** down.*

Some modal verbs have weak pronunciations. *Will, shall, would* and *should* have contracted forms, and all modal verbs can have contracted negative forms.

*I'd **keep** quiet if I were you.
You **can't help** liking her.
You **shouldn't be** so pessimistic.
It **won't make** much difference if we're late.*

CAN/COULD.

1. ABILITY.

a. Present and future.

CAN is usually used to talk about the present or the general ability, -the ability to do something any time you want to.

*Look! I can do it!
You can certainly cook even if you can't do anything else.*

BE ABLE is also possible but less common.

I'll be able to speak German in another few months.

But CAN is often possible when people make present decisions about future ability.

*We're too busy today, but we can repair your car tomorrow.
Can you come to a party on Saturday?*

b. Past.

COULD is used for "general ability", to say that you could do something any time you

wanted to.

*She could sing like an angel when she was a kid.(or she was able)
My father could speak ten languages.*

COULD is not used to talk about particular ability (to do something on one occasion) in the past. Instead we use WAS ABLE TO, MANAGED TO or SUCCEEDED IN.

*How many eggs were you able to get? (not could)
I managed to get 10% off the price. (not could)
After six hours' climbing, we succeeded in reaching the top of the mountain. (not could)*

The negative COULDN'T is used for both general and particular ability.

*When I was younger, I couldn't decide what I wanted to do.
Simon was so drunk that he couldn't find the front door.*

c. Conditional COULD.

COULD is also used in a conditional sense (meaning "would be able to).

*I could have a really good time if I had a flat of my own.
We could do it by midday if we had the tools.*

d. Could with the perfect infinitive.

Sometimes we want to say that we had the ability to do something, but we didn't try to do it. There is a special structure for this: COULD + perfect infinitive.

*I could have married anybody I wanted to
I could have killed her!
You could have helped me!*

The structure can have a conditional meaning:

I could have won if I hadn't fallen over.

Negative sentences with this structure express the idea of "I wouldn't have been able to do it even if I had tried".

I couldn't have won, so I didn't go in for the race.

2. POSSIBILITY (CAN and COULD, MAY and MIGHT)

a. Theoretical possibility.

CAN is used to say that events and situations are possible (without talking about the chances of them actually happening).

*Anybody who wants to can become a prison visitor.
How many elephants can fit into a mini?*

Sentences with CAN often give information about the characteristic behaviour of people or things.

*Scotland can be very warm in September.
Gold can't be dissolved in hydrochloric acid.*

To talk about the past, COULD is used.

My grandmother could be very unpleasant at times.

We often use CAN to make suggestions about possible solutions to a problem, or possible actions.

We've got three choices: we can go to the police, we can talk to Peter ourselves, or we can forget all about it.

In order to make suggestions more "tentative" -less strong and definite- we use COULD.

*We could try asking Lucy, if you think it's a good idea.
Could we meet again tomorrow?*

b. Chances.

1. Future possibility. We don't use CAN to say that there is a chance that something will happen. Instead, we usually use MAY or MIGHT.

We may go climbing this summer.

COULD is used to give the idea that something is just possible, but not particularly likely.

We could go climbing this summer, but I doubt if we'll have time.

2. Present possibility. MAY, MIGHT and COULD are also used to say that something is possibly true at the moment of speaking.

*You may be right.
 You could be right, but I don't think you are.
 This could be your big chance.*

CAN is sometimes used to talk about present possibility, but only in questions and negative sentences.

*Who can that be at the door?
 Can it be Susan? (Not *It can be Susan)
 What can she possibly want?
 It can't be true. (not *It can be true)*

3. CAN and COULD with the perfect infinitive. CAN and COULD are both used with the perfect infinitive (have + past participle) for speculating or guessing about the past. CAN is only used in questions and negative sentences.

*Where can she have gone?
 She can't have gone to school. It's Saturday.
 She could have gone off with some friends. (not can)*

COULD with the perfect infinitive, is also used to talk about an unrealized past possibility: something that was possible but didn't happen.

*You were stupid to go skiing there. You could have broken your leg.
 It wasn't a good idea to throw the TV out of the window. It could have hit somebody.
 You could have told me you had invited people to dinner (used to criticize people)
 My parents wanted me to be a doctor, but I couldn't have put up with all those years of study. (something was not possible.)*

MAY and MIGHT can also be used with the perfect infinitive in similar ways to COULD.

3. PERMISSION (CAN and COULD, MAY and MIGHT)

a. Asking for permission.

CAN, COULD, MAY and MIGHT are all used in asking for permission. CAN is probably the commonest of the four.

Can I have a drop more whisky?

COULD is rather more hesitant than CAN, and is used when you are not sure that you will get a

permission (or when you don't want to sound too sure).

Could I ask you something if you are not too busy?

MAY and MIGHT are used in a more formal style. MIGHT is more hesitant and is not very common.

b. Giving permission.

When we give permission we use CAN and MAY but not COULD or MIGHT.

Could I use your phone? Yes, of course, you can. (not could)

Might I trouble you for a light? You may indeed. (not might)

4. OFFERS AND REQUESTS.

CAN and COULD are often used to offer to do things for people, and to ask other people to do things. COULD is more hesitant, less definite than CAN and it is used when we want to make an offer or a request seem more polite or respectful. Statements and questions are both common.

I can lend you a pound till Wednesday if that will help.

I could do the shopping for you, if you're tired.

Can I carry your bag?

Could I give you dinner one of these days?

You can start by doing the washing up, and then you can clean the car.

You could phone Alice and see what time she's coming.

Can you come here a minute, please?

Could you help me with this letter, please?

EXERCISES

Fill the following spaces, using CAN for present, COULD for past and SHALL/WILL BE ABLE TO for future. There is no need to use other ABLE forms in this section. Put TO

where necessary before the infinitives.

1. _____ you stand on your head? I _____ when I was at school but I _____ now.
(second verb negative)
2. When I've passed my driving test I _____ hire a car from our local garage.
3. At the end of the month the Post Office will send him an enormous telephone bill which he _____ pay. (neg)
4. I _____ remember the address. (neg) _____ you even remember the street? (neg)
5. When the fog lifts we _____ see where we are.
6. You've put too much in your rucksack; you never _____ carry all that.
7. When I was a child I _____ understand adults, and now that I am an adult I _____ understand children. (neg, neg)
8. When you have taken your degree you _____ put B. A. after your name?
9. Don't try to look at all the pictures in the gallery. Otherwise when you get home you _____ remember any of them. (neg)
10. When I first went to Spain I _____ read Spanish but I _____ speak it.
(sec neg)
11. _____ you type? Yes. I _____ type but I _____ do shorthand.
(second neg)
12. I'm locked in. I _____ get out! (neg). _____ you squeeze between the bars?
(neg) No! I _____; I'm too fat. (neg).

In some of the following sentences either COULD or WAS ABLE could be used. In others only WAS/WERE ABLE is possible. Fill the spaces and put TO where necessary before the infinitives.

13. He was very strong; he _____ ski all day and dance all night.
14. The car plunged into the river. The driver _____ get out but the passengers were drowned.
15. I was a long way from the stage. I _____ see all right but I _____ hear very well. (2nd neg)
16. We _____ borrow umbrellas; so we didn't get wet.
17. _____ you walk or did they have to carry you?
18. I had no key so I _____ lock the door (neg).
19. I knew the town so I _____ advise him where to go.
20. When the garage had repaired our car we _____ continue our journey.
21. At five years old he _____ read quite well.
22. When I arrived everyone was asleep. Fortunately I _____ wake my sister and she let me in.
23. The swimmer was very tired but he _____ reach the shore before he collapsed.

24. The police were suspicious at first but I _____ convince them that we were innocent.

This section includes examples of COULD used for polite requests as a conditional.

25. _____ I speak to Mr. Pitt, please? I'm afraid he's out at the moment.
_____ you ring back later?
26. If you stood on my shoulders. _____ you reach the top of the wall? No, I'm afraid I _____. (neg)
27. If I sang _____ you accompany me on the piano? No, I _____; I _____ play the piano! (neg, neg)
28. If a letter comes for me _____ you please forward it to this address?
29. She made the wall very high so that boys _____ climb over it. (neg)
30. They took his passport so that he _____ leave the country. (neg)
31. _____ you tell me the time, please? I'm afraid I _____. I haven't got a watch.
32. If you had to, _____ you go without food for a week? I suppose I _____ if I had plenty of water.
33. _____ you lend me , 5? No, I _____. (neg)
34. They used to chain valuable books to library desks so that people _____ take them away. (neg)
35. He says he saw Clementine drowning but _____ help her as he _____ swim. (neg, neg)
36. If you had had the right tools _____ you have repaired the engine?

OTHER ACTIVITIES

THE LAST OF THE GOLD FEVER.

The story began in the last century, just three decades before the Klondike Gold Fever in Alaska, although this precious metal's existence in Northern Finland was known back in the sixteenth century. Some Norwegians found it in the Tenojoke river, on the frontier between Norway and Finland. They informed the Finnish authorities who in turn sent an official expedition with positive results and gold fever started in Finland.

The first prospectors had a hard fight, their only means of transport were canoes and walking in summer, while they used sleighs and skis in winter. Despite the tough conditions, many found the way to gold. At the beginning of 1970, about 600 prospectors worked from the banks of the Ivalojoiki River, covering a large area of the region although few became rich.

There was gold and still is, but not in large quantities, neither, it seems, enough to make you rich. However the gold found in the area is good quality, and highly prized by jewellers... "The gold found here is 22 carat", says a prospector, "I've found around about three kilos in all the time I've spent here, as well as some precious stones, like emeralds and garnets".

The gold fever in Finland has suffered many ups and downs, conditioned in part by the economic situation of the moment and the well-being of the Finns. The number of prospectors has increased over the last few years with unemployed and youth fed up with the contamination of the cities, and attracted by the wild life of the North and the hope of becoming rich, although possibly, this latter reason is of less importance than the basic desire to escape from civilization.

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QUESTIONS.

1. Write a summary of the main points in the text. (Don't write more than 80 words)
2. How long ago did people know about the existence of gold in Finland?
3. Why do they use different means of transport?
4. Write a paragraph about the job you would choose and explain why.
5. Write synonyms for these words according to the text:
means of transport tough
seems unemployed
contamination

WOMEN'S LIB.

HARRY: I've understood what this women's lib is all about. I can understand women in some countries struggling for their rights. But it strikes me that here in Britain women have already got as much freedom as they could possibly want. They have got the vote, they can go to university, they can compete with men in the professions on equal terms...

SHEILA: Rubbish! You are fooling yourself. How many women members of Parliament are there? About 30 out of 635. How many women company directors? How many trade union leaders? How many judges?

HARRY: Not many I agree. But why is that? Maybe their talents don't lie in those directions. Perhaps they prefer to be housewives.

SHEILA: *Prefer to be housewives? Can you imagine the boredom, the frustration?*

HARRY: *Oh yes, I can imagine it easily enough. But don't forget a lot of men have equally boring jobs. The real point is that most housewives, in my experience are content to be housewives. Take my wife, for example, she is not bored or frustrated. She finds her life quite satisfying: she cooks, cleans, gardens, ...*

SHEILA: *Oh I am aware of that. That is because over the centuries men have trained and educated women to consider themselves inferior and to accept their position. It is not just the men who are prejudiced against women. The women have become prejudiced against themselves. They believe they really are inferior.*

HARRY: *You mean they have been considered to accept their position?*

SHEILA: *Exactly. They have become brainwashed. It is the job of Women's Lib movement to open their eyes to the way they have been fooled, dominated and exploited.*



QUESTIONS.

1. Is Sheila completely convinced about women's rights in Britain?
2. Is she contented to be a housewife?
3. Put this sentence in the three types of conditional sentence:
I (not to miss) your party if I (know) where you live.
4. Put HAVE (NOT), SHOULD (NOT), MUST (NOT), NEED (NOT) where necessary.
To be a language teacher you _____ be good at languages.
to be a district nurse you _____ have secretarial qualification.
5. Composition: Are women conditioned to feel different from men and to accept a secondary role in life? Give reasons.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Drugs were originally produced from plants, animals or mineral sources, but today they are mainly synthetic. They include pain killers (analgesics), tranquillizers, anti-depressants, sleeping tablets and hard drugs such as heroin. Alcohol and heroin are also drugs.

Drugs affect the brain in different ways: stimulants seed up the brain and nerves so that people do not feel tired; sedatives calm the brain and make people feel sleepy; hallucinogens

distort the messages which come from the sense organs, so that strange sensations are experienced.

Once someone becomes addicted, it may be difficult for him to stop taking the drug, as his body reacts violently without the supply of drug it has become used to. Treatment is needed for a cure to be possible. People who become addicted to heroin and other hard drugs cannot very often face the painful withdrawal symptoms that come when they are without the drug, life becomes impossible and they may turn to crime to pay for more and more drugs. They often die of self-neglect, lack of food or blood poisoning caused by injecting themselves with a dirty needle.

Spirits e. g. whisky, brandy and gin are distilled so that they contain a high percentage of ethyl alcohol. Therefore it is more dangerous to drink spirits than beer or wine. The worst way in which alcohol affects people is to make them addicted to it. Alcohol also makes us lose self-control and do silly things which we would not do otherwise. Heavy drinking can cause cirrhosis of the liver and other diseases of the organs.

QUESTIONS.

1. In which way do drugs affect people?
2. Which is the relationship among effects produced by different drugs?
3. Turn into the passive voice:
Sedatives calm the brain and make people feel sleepy.
4. Complete:
The doctor told me __ (1) __ more than 2 pills each time so that I __ (2) __ to them.
(1) not take. (2) become addicted.
5. Do you know people under 18 are not allowed to drink spirits in Great Britain? Is this case so in your country? What is your opinion about it?

THE SIMPLE PAST AND PAST CONTINUOUS.

THE SIMPLE PAST TENSE.

The simple past usually refers to a definite time in the past. It is used with adverbs which refer to time in the past such as *yesterday, last week, two days ago*, etc.

I saw her yesterday.

She arrived last Monday.

It is often used with questions beginning with *when* or *where*.

When did he leave?

Where did he go?

The simple past may be used to express something that was habitual in the past.

*She always went abroad for her holidays.
Whenever they had a party they invited him.*

Spanish usually uses the imperfect in these cases.

The simple past is sometimes used instead of the present as it is considered to be more polite. It refers to attitude rather than time.

I want/wanted to ask you something.

A hypothetical past is found in subordinate clauses, particularly if-clauses. It is sometimes called the *modal preterite*. It is often used after *I wish* to express something that has not yet become, or cannot become, reality.

*If you meant it, you would prove it.
I wish I had a colour television.*

The past progressive.

The past progressive, like other tenses in the progressive aspect, frequently has emotional overtones. Adverbs such as *always*, *continually*, *all day*, etc. are often included to mark this more clearly.

He was continually writing letters.

The past progressive may be used to contrast one event in the past with another.

She was washing up when the telephone rang.

If the two actions are going on simultaneously, the verbs in both the main clause and in the subordinate clause may be in the past progressive.

While he was writing the addresses on some envelopes, she was putting the stamps on the others.

The verbs *go to*, *plan to*, *intend to*, *hope to*, *try to*, etc. are often used in the progressive to indicate intention.

*I was going to tell you about it (but I forgot).
I was planning to go to town this week (but I find I can't)*

Put the verbs in brackets into the simple past or past continuous tense.

1. Mr Smith never (wake)_____ in time in the mornings and always (get)_____ into trouble for being late; so one day he (go)_____ to town and (buy)_____ an alarm clock.
2. To get home he (have to)_____ go through a field where a bad-tempered bull usually (graze)_____.
3. This bull normally (not chase)_____ people unless something (make)_____ him

- angry. Unfortunately, as Mr. Smith (cross)_____ the field, his alarm clock (go)_____ off.
4. This (annoy)_____ the bull, who immediately (begin)_____ to chase Mr Smith.
 5. Mr Smith (carry)_____ an open umbrella as it (rain)_____ slightly. He (throw)_____ the umbrella to the ground and (run)_____ away as fast as he could.
 6. The bull (stop)_____ and (begin)_____ to attack the umbrella. While he (do)_____ this Mr Smith escaped.
 7. When he (awake)_____ she (sit)_____ on the window. She (look)_____ at something in the street, but when he (call)_____ her she (turn)_____ and (smile)_____ at him.
 8. Why you (interrupt)_____ me just now? I (have)_____ a very interesting conversation with Mr Pitt.
 9. The murderer (carry)_____ the corpse down the stairs when he (hear)_____ a knock on the door.
 10. When I (look)_____ through your books I (notice)_____ that you have a copy of Murder in the Cathedral.
 11. As they (walk)_____ along the road they (hear)_____ a car coming from behind them. Tom (turn)_____ round and (hold)_____ up his hand. The car (stop)_____.
 12. When I (arrive)_____ at the station Mary (wait)_____ for me. She (wear)_____ a blue dress and (look)_____ very pretty. As soon as she (see)_____ me she (wave)_____ her umbrella and (shout)_____ something, but I couldn't hear what she (say)_____ because everybody (make)_____ such a noise.
 13. The prisoner (escape)_____ by climbing the wall on the garden where he (work)_____. He (wear)_____ blue overalls and black shoes.
 14. She said that the car (travel)_____ at 40 k.p.h. when it (begin)_____ to skid.
 15. She said that she (not like)_____ her present flat and (try)_____ to find another.
 16. While he (make)_____ his speech the minister suddenly (feel)_____ faint. But someone (bring)_____ him a glass of water and after a few minutes he (be able)_____ to continue.
 17. When I (see)_____ him he (paint)_____ a portrait of his wife. You (like)_____ it? He only just (start)_____ when I (see)_____ it, so I couldn't judge.
 18. I (take)_____ my friend to a murder trial the other day. Who (be)_____ tried? A man called Bill Sykes. Was he acquitted? I don't know. They still (listen)_____ to the evidence when we (leave)_____.
 19. I (be)_____ sorry that I (have to)_____ leave the party early, because I

- (enjoy)_____ myself.
20. As we (come)_____ here a policeman (stop)_____ us. He (say)_____ that he (look)_____ for some stolen property and (ask)_____ if he could search the car.
21. I (see)_____ you yesterday from the bus. Why you (use)_____ a stick? I (use)_____ a stick because I had hurt my leg that morning falling off a horse. Whose horse you (ride)_____?
22. The floor was covered with balls of wool. Obviously Mrs Pitt (knit)_____ something.
23. Ann said that she (be)_____ on holiday. I (say)_____ that I (hope)_____ that she (enjoy)_____ herself.
24. While he (water)_____ the flowers it (begin)_____ to rain. He (put)_____ up his umbrella and (go)_____ on watering.
25. I just (write)_____ a cheque when I (remember)_____ that I (have)_____ nothing in the bank.
26. I (find)_____ this ring as I (dig)_____ in the garden. It looks very old. I wonder who it (belong)_____ to?
27. When I last (see)_____ her she (hurry)_____ along the road to the station. I (ask)_____ her where she (go)_____ and she (say)_____, "London", but I don't think she (speak)_____ the truth because there (not be)_____ any train for London at that time.
28. The tailor said, "Your suit will be ready on Monday". But when I (call)_____ on Monday he still (work)_____ on it.
29. The teacher (come)_____ into the classroom unusually early and one of the boys, who (smoke)_____ a cigarette, (have)_____ no time to put it out. So he (throw)_____ it into his desk and (hope)_____ for the best.
30. A little later the teacher (notice)_____ that smoke (rise)_____ from this desk. You (smoke)_____ when I (come)_____ in? he (ask)_____.