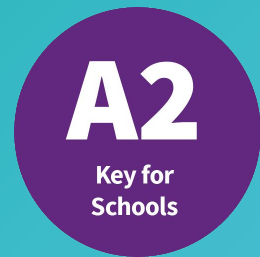


GOLD

experience

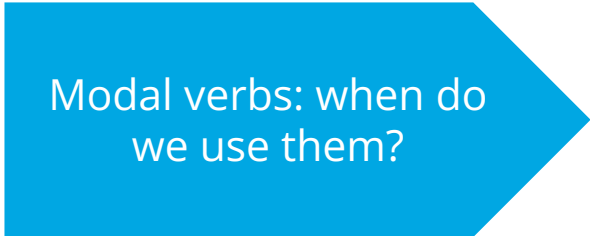


Unit 7 – modal verbs of
ability, possibility and
obligation

Modal verbs all have a function. They tell us how the speaker feels.

Let's look at:

1. Modal verbs of ability and possibility.
2. Modal verbs of obligation and no obligation.
3. How to use modal verbs in a sentence.



Modal verbs: when do we use them?

Function: ability, possibility, obligation



I **couldn't** go on the bike ride this weekend because I **had to** rest. I didn't want to do so many kilometres.

You **don't have to** ride the whole distance. You **can** stop at any time. Can you come next week?



ability and possibility in the present and past	obligation in the present and past	no obligation in the present and past
present: can/can'	present: have	present: don't/doesn't have
past: could/couldn'	past: had to	past: didn't have to



Look at the conversation and use the modal verbs in bold to help complete the table.

Function: ability, possibility, obligation



I **couldn't** go on the bike ride this weekend because I **had to** rest. I didn't want to do so many kilometres.

You **don't have to** ride the whole distance. You **can** stop at any time. Can you come next week?



ability and possibility in the present and past	obligation in the present and past	no obligation in the present and past
present: can/can't e.g. You can stop at any time.	present: have to e.g. I have to work.	present: don't/doesn't have to e.g. You don't have to ride the whole distance.
past: could/couldn't e.g. I couldn't go on the bike ride.	past: had to e.g. I had to rest.	past: didn't have to e.g. You didn't have to bring anything.



We use *doesn't have to* with the third person singular – *he/she/it*, e.g. 'He *doesn't have to* come.'

We use *have to/had to* to talk about general rules or things that are necessary.

Modal verbs: How do we make sentences with *can/could*?

Form: *can* and *could*



I **couldn't** go on the bike ride this weekend.

Add 'not': cannot (can't); could not (couldn't).

How do we make *can/could* negative?

B. We invert the subject ('you') and 'can' to make a question.

Which question is correct: A or B?
A: You can dance salsa?
B: Can you dance salsa?



Look at the examples again. After can/could, do we use a verb infinitive or a verb *-ing*?

A verb infinitive.

You **can** stop at any time.

Can you come next week?



No. It is a bare infinitive.

✓ *I can swim.*

✗ *I can to swim.*

Does the verb infinitive use *to*?

Form: *can* and *could*



I **couldn't** go on the bike ride this weekend.

You **can** stop at any time.

Can you come next week?



positive	negative	question
e.g. You can stop anytime.	e.g. I couldn't go on the bike ride.	e.g. Can you come next week? Where can you go?
subject + <i>can/could</i> + verb infinitive	subject + <i>can't/couldn't</i> + verb infinitive	(qu. word) + <i>can/could</i> + subject + verb infinitive?

Verb infinitive is what you find in a dictionary. But remember, it is without to.

I can swim. ✓

I can to swim. ✗

Short answers are always:

Yes, I/you/he/she/it/we/they can/could.

No, I/you/he/she/it/we/they can't/couldn't.



We use the same structure with all subjects: *I, you, he, she, it, we, they*.

We don't stress the word *can* in the positive and question forms. Listen to how your teacher says it:

/kən/ ○

You can stop.

can't =
cannot (one word)

What about
have to?

Form: *have to/had to/not have to*



I had to rest.

You don't have to ride the whole distance.



Did not (didn't).

In the negative past, do we use *do not*, *does not* or *did not*?

In the negative form, which auxiliary verb is added?

Do not (don't), does not (doesn't), did not (didn't).

Third person (he/she/it) in the present.

When do we use *does not (doesn't)*?



Look at the examples again. After *have to/had to*, do we use an verb infinitive or a verb *-ing*?

A verb infinitive.

Form: *have to/had to/not have to*



I had to rest.

You don't have to ride the whole distance.



positive			negative		
I/You/We/They	have to	go to school.	I/You/We/They	don't have to	go to school.
	had to			didn't have to	
He/She/It	has to		He/She/It	doesn't have to	
	had to		He/She/It	didn't have to	

Remember, this is the verb infinitive. It doesn't change.



Careful with the changes in the third person (*he/she/it*) in the present!

Let's practise!

Practice activities

Choose the correct answers from the words in brackets.

1. I **have to/couldn't/can't** speak any other languages, but my sister **could/have to/has to** speak a lot of French at work. She works with French companies a lot.
2. Where **could/can/don't have to** I catch the bus from? I **don't have to/have to/doesn't have to** get to the town centre.
3. **Could/Can/Does** Emily come on Saturday? She **can/could/doesn't have to** bring anything because I bought all the food yesterday.
4. Jenny **doesn't have to/didn't have to/can't** go to work yesterday because the office was closed.
5. **Can you/Do you have to/Could you** wear a school uniform or **can you/do you have to/does you have to** wear normal clothes?
6. My dad **has to/have to/had to** travel to Brazil last week for work.