

MODAL VERBS

Test your grammar

1 All modal verbs can be used to express degrees of probability.

Which of these sentences express probability? Put a ✓. Which don't? Put a ✗.

Example

She **must** be very rich. ✓ (probability)
You **must** do your homework. ✗

a We **might** go to Hawaii for our honeymoon.

b You **mustn't** smoke in this part of the restaurant.

c He **can't** be coming. It's already after ten o'clock.

d She **could** speak three languages fluently by the time she was five.



e He **could** be working in the library.

f The weather forecast says it **may** snow tomorrow.

g Good morning. **May** I speak to Mr Jones?

h **Will** you help me do my homework?

i That **will** be Ken on the phone. He promised to ring.

j You **should** see a doctor as soon as possible.

k It's eight o'clock. They **should** be arriving soon.

l They **must** have won the lottery.
m You **should** have told her the truth.

2 What concepts do the other sentences 'express'?

Example

You **must** do your homework. (obligation)

1 Discussing grammar

1 Which of the words in the right hand column can fit into the sentences on the left? Sometimes several will fit. Discuss the possibilities with a partner.

- a I _____ ask you a question about this exercise?
b _____ you help me with this exercise, please?
c He'll _____ hurry if he wants to get here in time.
d I _____ be able to come round and see you tonight.
e Sally _____ read when she was only three.
f I _____ be seeing Theo later this evening, but I'm not sure.
g You _____ be feeling very excited about your trip to Florida.
h They _____ have finished dinner by now.
i You _____ pass the exam easily. You've worked really hard.
j She always _____ leave work early on Fridays.
k That _____ be the taxi.
have/has to

must

can

may

might

could

should

will/'ll

LANGUAGE IN CONTEXT

Modal verbs of probability

1 Read the newspaper headlines. What do you think has happened to the man and the woman? Read the ideas below. Which do you agree with?

'Excuse me... I've just jumped off the Empire State Building!'

He must be *Superman!*

He can't be serious. He must be joking.

He might be a bungee-jumper.

He could have come down by parachute.

He might have been trying to commit suicide.

He may be acting in a film.

He must have injured himself.

His story will be in all the newspapers.

He may become famous.

40 YEARS IN BED - WITH FLU

She probably doesn't have flu. (can't)

It's likely that she has had a more serious illness. (must)

Perhaps she is just very lazy. (might)

It's not possible that the doctor told her to stay in bed for so long. (couldn't)

Surely someone has been looking after her. (must)

She will probably find it very difficult to walk again. (may)

2 Rewrite the ideas in B using the modal verb in brackets.

2 Underline the correct answer.

- a I'm sorry I'm late, I had to go/should have gone to the post office.
b You mustn't/don't have to go to France to learn French, but it helps.
c You mustn't/don't have to drive if you've been drinking.
d I'm sorry. I may not/cannot be able to come to your party on Saturday.
e You lucky thing!/How could you/were you able to get Madonna's autograph?



- f I just waited outside the stage door and asked her if I could/was able to have it.
g The car wouldn't/couldn't start this morning, so I was late for work.
h I wouldn't/couldn't start the car this morning, so I was late for work.
i Do this exercise for homework. You shouldn't/mustn't have any problems with it.
j We needn't have paid/didn't need to pay to get into the museum. It was free.