

## Unit 2: E-mail or Informal Writing

This document provides a list and description of modal verbs. As described in the audio, modals are important to set a polite tone and clearly inform of ability or necessity. Please review this list to refresh knowledge of the use of modal verbs.

### Modal Verbs

#### Form

affirmative		negative
<i>can</i>	<i>could</i>	modals verbs form the negative with 'not': You <b>should not/shouldn't</b> waste energy.
<i>will</i>	<i>would</i>	
<i>shall</i>	<i>should</i>	<b>question</b>
<i>may</i>	<i>might</i>	for questions with modals the word order changes:
<i>must</i>		<b>Can</b> you please give me the details for the new project?

#### Usage and examples

Modal verbs are used to express different ideas and speaker's feelings or attitudes such as ability, opinion, permission, necessity etc.. Modal verbs do not change their form. They must come with a main verb, which is used in the infinitive form without 'to'. Their use follows a few non-stated cultural rules.

Examples of use:

- For obligation use 'must' or have to (adults do not normally tell other adults they must):

*We **must** hand in the budget for the project on Friday.*

- For prohibition use 'must not/mustn't':

*In order to win the competition for the contract we **mustn't** forget to include qualifications.*

- For ability use 'can – can not/can't':

*Sorry, I **can't** come to next week's meeting. I'm at a Greenhouse conference in Berlin.*

- For probability use 'should, may, might, could' (these follow level of certainty, with should the most certain and could the least):

*We **should** be finished by Friday if the supplier delivers the software.*

- For necessity and advice use 'should – should not/shouldn't' (could may be used to offer advice when one wants to be very diplomatic):

*Considering the circumstances you **should** think about investing into a new Project Management System (BMS). The lack of an up-to-date system is a problem you **shouldn't** ignore.*