

Modal verbs – must/may/might

Introduction

1) We use modal verbs to show if we believe something is certain, probable or possible (or not). We also use modals to ask permission, make requests and offers etc.

Modal verbs fall into the category of auxiliary verbs (also known as *helping verbs*). It means that they are used together with a main verb to give grammatical information and additional meaning to a sentence.

2) We use the modal verb *must* and *the base form of the verb* to form sentences. Questions are formed by inverting the subject and *must*. Negatives are formed with *not*. Contracted forms are used (*mustn't*).

We can use the modal verb *must*:

a) to express obligation, duty, or prohibition (this also refers to laws and regulations).

*You **must** wear a seatbelt at all times.*

*You **mustn't** use your smartphone while driving.*

b) to emphasize the necessity of something.

*People **must** drink a lot of water during the day.*

c) to express our certainty in something being true.

*Look! There are puddles everywhere. **It must have rained.***

*You are still working? **You must be tired!***

d) to give a strong recommendation.

*You **must** listen to this song, it's so catchy!*

We use the modal verb *may* and *the base form of the verb* to form sentences. Questions are formed by inverting the subject and *may*. Negatives are formed with *not*.

We can use the modal verb *may*:

a) to give permission or prohibit something.

*If you have finished the test, you **may** leave the room.*

*You **may not** park here.*

b) to ask for permission (more polite than *can*).

***May** I use your bathroom, please?*

c) to express wishes.

***May** you both live happily!*

d) in academic (or scientific) language to refer to things that typically happen in certain situations.

*Drivers **may** feel tired after driving for 3 hours straight.*

Note that we usually use the modal verbs *may* and *might* without a significant difference in meaning when expressing possibility. However, *might* often implies a smaller chance of something happening.

*I **might** go to the movies tonight. I'm not sure.*

Short Story Dialogue

- *Do you know why I've been feeling so sick lately?*
- *I'm not a doctor. **You must set an appointment with one.***
- *No, I'm fine. I **must be tired from working 12 hours a day.***
- ***It may be, but you must go to the doctor anyway!***
- *I'll try to sleep more.*
- ***You know that it might get worse, right?** Should I come along?*
- *That would be great actually!*

Independent Practice - Modal verbs – must/may/might

1) Fill in the gaps with *must* or *may*.

- a. The lights are out. They have gone out.
- b. I borrow your pen, please?
- c. You go once you fill out the papers.
- d. We go now. Otherwise we'll miss our flight.

2) Match the sentences.

a. You may not cross the street here.	1. I might go to a dinner party next week.
b. Will you be at home at 8?	2. The traffic is crazy.
c. May I use borrow your red dress?	3. I might stop by.

3) React to the situations. Form sentences using *must* or *might*.

a. Your friend is trying to park his car. Tell him that there is a sign "No Parking" nearby.
b. Your sister is baking a cake. Tell her to follow the recipe.
c. You want to go to the movies with your friend but you're not sure if it is still on.

Independent Practice: Answers - Modal verbs – must/may/might

1) Fill in the gaps with *must* or *may*.

- a. The lights are out. They **must** have gone out.
- b. **May** I borrow your pen, please?
- c. You **may** go once you fill out the papers.
- d. We **must** go now. Otherwise we'll miss our flight.

2) Match the sentences.

a. You may not cross the street here.	2. The traffic is crazy.
b. Will you be at home at 8?	3. I might stop by.
c. May I use borrow your red dress?	1. I might go to a dinner party next week.

3) React to the situations. Form sentences using *must* or *might*.

- a. You mustn't park here.
- b. You must follow the recipe.
- c. We might go to the movies.