

# MODAL VERBS

# HERE'S A LIST OF THE MODAL VERBS IN ENGLISH:

can      could      may      might      will

would      must      shall      should      ought to



# PROBABILITY:

- ▶ First, they can be used when we want to say how sure we are that something happened / is happening / will happen. We often call these 'modals of deduction' or 'speculation' or 'certainty' or 'probability'.

For example:

- ▶ It's snowing, so it **must be** very cold outside.
- ▶ I don't know where John is. He **could have missed** the train.
- ▶ This bill **can't be** right. £200 for two cups of coffee!

# ABILITY

- ▶ We use 'can' and 'could' to talk about a skill or ability.

For example: She **can speak** six languages.

- ▶ My grandfather **could play** golf very well
- ▶ I **can't drive**

# OBLIGATION AND ADVICE

- ▶ We can use verbs such as 'must' or 'should' to say when something is necessary or unnecessary, or to give advice.

For example: Children **must do** their homework.

- ▶ We **have to wear** a uniform at work.
- ▶ You **should stop** smoking.

# PERMISSION

- ▶ We can use verbs such as 'can', 'could' and 'may' to ask for and give permission. We also use modal verbs to say something is not allowed.

For example: **Could I leave** early today, please?

- ▶ You **may not use** the car tonight.
- ▶ **Can we swim** in the lake?

# HABITS

- ▶ We can use 'will' and 'would' to talk about habits or things we usually do, or did in the past.

For example: When I lived in Italy, we **would** often **eat** in the restaurant next to my flat.

- ▶ John **will** always **be** late!