

# Indicating degrees of possibility and certainty

## Using Modal Verbs

“It must be a cultural thing.”



## Modal Verbs



Modal verbs express **certainty, ability** or **obligation**.

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may

might

ought

shall

should

would

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could



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*Which modal verbs are to do with certainty?*

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*Which modal verbs are to do with obligation?*

## Modal Verbs



Modal verbs are placed before the **verb** they are **modifying**.



I thought I **could** **hear** someone in the pantry.

You **might** **see** him there if you open the door.

He **should** **sleep** in the room that we gave him.

## Indicating Degrees of **Certainty** using Modal Verbs



He **might** have come from Outer Space.

He **will** have come from Outer Space. ✓

He **may** have come from Outer Space.

*Which sentence is most **certain**?*



## Indicating Degrees of **Obligation** using Modal Verbs



They **should** report him to the government.

They **ought to** report him to the government.

They **must** report him to the government. ✓

*Which sentence has the strongest degree of **obligation**?*



## Indicating Ability using Modal Verbs



I **might** understand his mission.

I **would** understand his mission.

I **can** understand his mission. ✓

I **must** understand his mission.

*Which sentence indicates **ability**?*



## Using Modal Verbs



**Modal verbs** are useful for **expressing shades of meaning**.



I **could** **worry** about our visitor but I **will** **let** him just get on.



*It is worrying but I intend not to interfere.*

I **should** **tell** someone now but I **might** **wait** a few more days.



*I feel obliged to tell someone but it's possible that I will wait a bit.*

You **can** **ask** him to leave the pantry but **must** you risk upsetting him?

*You are able to ask him but is it necessary?*

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