Section 6  modal verbs

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language notes
Beginners may take a little time to get used to the special grammatical characteristics of modal verbs. However, problems with the forms should disappear quite quickly with practice, and mistakes like *We must to stop now. or *Do you can speak Russian? are unusual after the first stages.

The exact meanings and uses of some of these verbs will take more time to grasp, especially for students whose languages don’t have an equivalent structure. At this level we teach the most basic points; more subtle uses and distinctions can be left until later.

possible further activities
The texts are just intended for introductory reading. However, if you want to base an activity on them, you could ask students to try to find advertisements, public notices or song titles containing must, can/can’t or other modal verbs.

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possible further activities

Third person -s? Say a series of verbs, some modal, some not. Students must put them after she, as quickly as possible. Like this:
‘want’ – ‘she wants’  ‘go’ – ‘she goes’  ‘must’ – ‘she must’
‘think’ – ‘she thinks’  ‘can’ – ‘she can’  ‘may’ – ‘she may’
‘start’ – she starts’

Question forms  Do the same, but students make questions with she. Like this:
‘want’ – ‘does she want?’  ‘must’ – ‘must she?’

Infinitives  Do the same using modals or other verbs that can be followed by infinitives (affirmative or negative). Students reply ‘She … dance’. Like this:
‘want’ – ‘She wants to dance’  ‘must’ – ‘She must dance’
‘can’t’ – ‘she can’t dance’  ‘doesn’t like’ – ‘she doesn’t like to dance’

Useful non-modal verbs for this exercise: want, hope, like, expect, prefer.

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language notes
Note that the pronunciation of must depends on whether it is stressed (/mʌst/) or not (/məst/): this point is practised on the CD-ROM.

possible further activities

Rules  Students draw up lists of rules/laws for the class, the school, the country, politicians, parents, the teacher etc, using must, mustn’t and don’t have to. This can be done in groups: which group can draw up the best or funniest set of rules?

An asterisk (*) indicates an incorrect form or use.  ➔ Section 6 continues
possible further activities

Past obligation  Students say or write what they had to do, or didn’t have to do, when they were small children. Help with vocabulary. They may also want to mention things that they were not allowed to do (not taught here): couldn’t will do for this.

Military service  If students can interview somebody who has done military service, they can write the things that he/she had to do, didn’t have to do or couldn’t do.

possible further activities

Advice for tourists  Students list some suggestions for people visiting their country, region or hometown. (‘You should spend a day or two on the West Coast.’ ‘You should try our famous fish soup.’ ‘You shouldn’t go out alone at night.’)

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language notes

Note that the pronunciation of can depends on whether it is stressed (/kæn/) or not (/kən/): this point is practised on the CD-ROM.

possible further activities

Boasting and confessing  Students either tell lies about what they can do, or say all the things they can’t do. Who can produce the most impressive piece of boasting or the most miserable confession? (‘I can speak six languages.’ ‘That’s nothing. I can speak twelve languages.’ ‘That’s nothing. I can speak all the languages in the world.’ ‘I can’t sing.’ ‘I can’t sing or dance.’ ‘I can’t remember things.’ ‘I can’t remember my name.’)

Acting  Students (individually or in groups) act inability to do things (e.g. see, hear, drive, play the piano, sing, walk, draw, understand, remember, go to sleep, wake up, stop eating). They can be given the names of the actions on cards. They can use words, but not the word for the action they’re acting. The class have to guess. (‘You can’t sing.’)

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possible further activities

Predicting  Students complete the sentence ‘One day, people will be able to …’ in as many ways as possible. Help with vocabulary.

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possible further activities

Present possibilities  Ask students what they think some well-known person may be doing just now. Make sure they can manage the progressive infinitive. (‘He may be travelling.’ ‘She may be relaxing.’ ‘He may be playing golf.’)

Future hopes or fears  Students write sentences beginning ‘One day I may/might (not) …’.
possible further activities

Mime: asking permission  Without speaking, students ask for permission to do things. The class has to guess what their question is. For example:
‘Can I go out?’ ‘Can I borrow your pen?’ ‘Can I open the window?’
‘Can I buy you a drink?’ ‘Can I have your phone number?’
Students can be given the questions on cards if they don’t have enough ideas.

possible further activities

Mime: requests  A similar activity to the one for pages 84–85, but students mime requests beginning ‘Could you …?’

possible further activities

Discussion about holiday  Students work in groups to prepare and act a short conversation about plans for a family holiday. They must include as many questions using ‘Shall we …?’ as possible. (‘Where shall we go?’ ‘How long shall we stay?’ ‘Shall we take the dog?’)

possible further activities

Guessing people’s wishes  Students work in pairs. Each student writes three or more sentences about his/her partner beginning ‘I think you’d like to …’ or ‘I don’t think you’d like to …’. Then they tell each other what they’ve written and find out if they’re right (possible answers: ‘Yes, I would’ or ‘No, I wouldn’t’).

language notes

Students often think that used to has a present form:
*I use to play tennis every weekend.

possible further activities

‘I used to …’  Students extend Exercise 4, writing or saying more things that they used to do/be/have etc.

Mime  Students mime things that they used to be/have/do etc. The class has to guess what is being mimed. (‘You used to play the guitar.’ ‘You used to have long hair.’)