

Modal Verbs

What are modal verbs?

A modal is a type of verb that is used to express:

ability

obligation

possibility

permission

Which verbs are modal verbs?

The modal verbs include: **must**
can **shall** **could**
should **might**
would **may** **will**

can

To express ability:

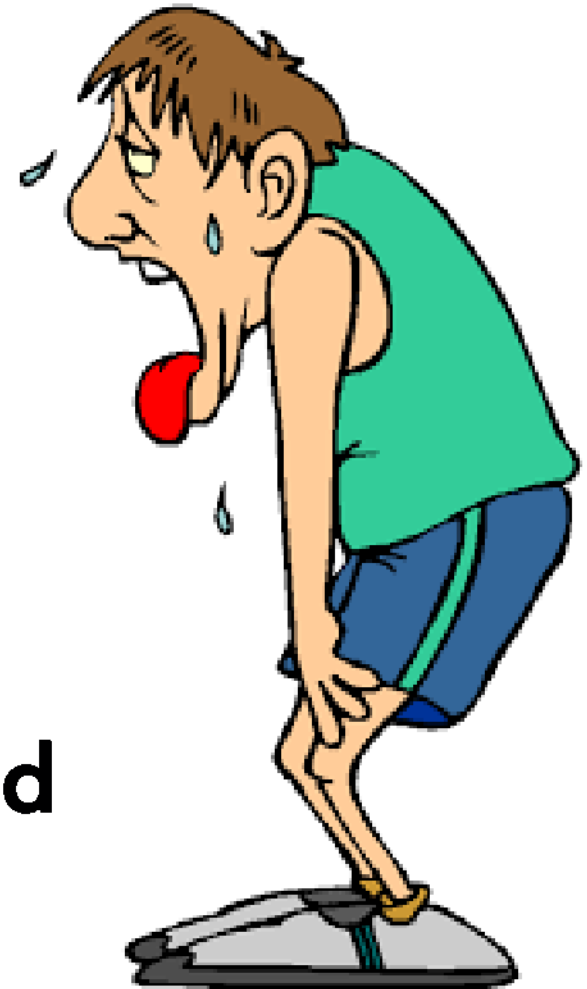
I can speak a little Russian.

To request permission:

Can I open the window?

To show a general truth:

Too much exercise can be bad for you.



may

To express possibility:

I may be home late.

To request permission:

May I sit down, please?

To show a general truth

A list of verbs may be found on page 42.



must

To express obligation:

I must go now.

To express strong belief:

**She must be over 90
years old.**



should

To give advice:

You should stop smoking.

To ask for advice:

Should I have cake for dinner?

To show obligation:

Children should look after their parents in old age.



might

To express possibility:

She might be a friend of Richard's.

**To ask permission
(very formal):**

Might we have a little more time to finish the exam?



would

To request or offer:

Would you like a cup of tea?

In "if-sentences":

If I were you, I would say sorry.



will



To make a promise:

I will come home tomorrow.

To make a request:

Will you close that window?

To express certainty:

My birthday will be on a Monday this year.

could



To express possibility:

I could teach the dog a new trick.

To make a request:

Could you help me with this?

To ask for permission:

Could I borrow your bike ?

shall

To express certainty:

I shall have plenty to tell you.

To make an offer:

Shall I go and make dinner?

