

May, Might, Can, and Could

A **modal auxiliary** is a helping verb that shows how things could be or should be. Some tell how likely or unlikely it is that an action will happen.

may, might: the action could take place but is not likely

can: it is possible that the action will take place

could: it is unknown how likely or unlikely that something may happen

possible

unknown how likely or unlikely

Alaska **can** look amazingly beautiful, but it **could** also bring danger.

May, Might, Can, and Could

Indicate the modal auxiliary in each sentence and identify whether it means that the situation *could take place*, *is possible*, or *likelihood unknown*.

- 1 Dr. Mint can go to New Zealand next year.
- 2 He could take his assistant with him.
- 3 Dr. Mint may stay for three months.
- 4 He might make some important discoveries.
- 5 Dr. Mint could have become famous.

Would, Should, and Must

Some modal auxiliaries express the feelings or opinion of the writer or speaker.

would—the writer expresses willingness

should—the writer is suggesting an action

must—the writer expresses a need for something to happen

suggests an action

Alaska **should** be an industry-free zone.

This land **must** be saved from air quality.

expresses a need

Would, Should, and Must

Identify the modal auxiliary in each sentence and tell whether the sentence expresses a suggestion, a willingness, or a need.

- 1 Dr. Hill should go to Florida.
- 2 He must learn more about this land.
- 3 I think he should take Dr. Berry with him.
- 4 I would go, too, if I were able.
- 5 I must find a way to go to San Francisco.

Using Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries help writers state their ideas clearly. Often you can change the meaning of a sentence by changing the modal auxiliary.

possible

Teachers **can** help us learn about the world.

expresses a need

Teachers **must** help us learn about the environment in order to protect it.

Using Modal Auxiliaries

To complete each sentence, choose a modal auxiliary to fill in the blank that expresses your idea or opinion. Then tell the meaning of the modal auxiliary that you chose.

- 1 If you go to San Diego, you _____ see a whale.
- 2 It _____ be playing with its baby.
- 3 You _____ see people, too.
- 4 A crab _____ suddenly appear on the beach.
- 5 If that happened, you _____ take a photograph.
- 6 Your family _____ enjoy seeing it.

Review Modal Auxiliaries

A **modal auxiliary** is a helping verb that shows how things could be or should be. Some tell how likely or unlikely it is that an action will happen.

may, might: the action could take place but is not likely

can: it is possible that the action will take place

could: it is unknown how likely or unlikely that something may happen

possible
 Hawaii **can** be really warm in the Fall, but it *unknown how likely or unlikely* **could** also be windy.

Review Modal Auxiliaries

Some modal auxiliaries express the feelings or opinion of the writer or speaker.

would—the writer expresses willingness

should—the writer is suggesting an action

must—the writer expresses a need for something to happen

suggests an action

People visiting Hawaii **should** be careful with the turtles.

The turtles **must** be protected.

expresses a need

Modal auxiliaries help writers state their ideas clearly. Often you can change the meaning of a sentence by changing the modal auxiliary.

Review Modal Auxiliaries

Identify the modal auxiliary in each sentence and name its meaning.

- 1 I think he should go to see the doctor.
- 2 She might want to go to the zoo tomorrow.
- 3 You must try the chocolate ice cream at the new shop.
- 4 Megan should go to her class.

Connect to Writing: Using Modal Auxiliaries

A **modal auxiliary** is a helping verb that shows how things could be or should be. Some, such as *may*, *might*, *can*, and *could*, tell how likely or unlikely it is that an action will happen. Others, such as *would*, *should*, and *must*, express the opinions of the writer or speaker.

Modal auxiliaries make ideas clear, tell the reader how likely it is that something will happen, and clearly express the feelings or opinions of the writer. An important part of revising is adding modal auxiliaries if they can make the writing clearer.