

Modals

I **can** eat all the hotdogs.

Would you please turn down the music?

You **must not** litter.



Grammar in Context

Theme: Precious things

Words by Theme



Read the conversation between two teachers and answer the questions.

Ms Lee: **Should** we look for spots for field trips this Saturday?

Mr Jones: Sure! We **must** visit the Cultural Fair in PMQ.

Ms Lee: ① **Could** you tell me more about the fair?

Mr Jones: The fair brings together artists¹ and craftsmen² who work on different types of mediums. During the fair, they showcase³ their works.

Ms Lee: Sounds great!

Mr Jones: One of the highlights⁴ is the workshop of a paper-cutting master who **can** make gowns out of paper.

Ms Lee: I've heard that Chinese paper-cut has been listed as an intangible cultural heritage⁵ of humanity by the UNESCO. I love decorative⁶ art. ② My grandma **could** do paper-cuts for the Chinese New Year, but her hands are not agile enough now. I'm sure the students will like it! ③ **Could** we join the workshop?

Mr Jones: Of course! We **have to** register for the workshop online as early as possible though. It's very popular.

Ms Lee: **Would** you please do the online registration for both of us? I dropped my laptop and the screen is now broken. I have a seminar to attend next week. ④ I **must** bring my own laptop.

Mr Jones: No worries. ⑤ Our IT technician **can** fix it.

Ms Lee: That's great!



1. Read sentences ① – ④. What are the purposes of the modals? Write the numbers in the correct boxes.

To talk about ability

To ask for permission

To talk about advice and obligation

To make a request

2. Read sentence ⑤. Rewrite it with *be able to*.



More to take away

PMQ (formerly *Police Married Quarters*) = first served as the Central School's campus, then the dormitory for police officers and now a creative landmark

PART 1 Talking about advice and obligation

We use *must* and *should* to talk about advice.

Advice	
A strong opinion	<p><i>must</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You <i>must</i> see the Picasso exhibition. We <i>must not</i> buy anything from this online shop. <i>Must</i> I try the cake?
A good idea	<p><i>should</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You <i>should</i> play with your dog more often. We <i>should not</i> eat before we go to bed. <i>Should</i> I tip the waiter?



We use *must* and *have to* to talk about things that are necessary to do.

Obligation	
What you think (personal)	<p><i>must</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We <i>must</i> talk about the new project. Every member <i>must</i> contribute their own ideas.
What the authority says (situational)	<p><i>have to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You <i>have to</i> brush your teeth twice a day. <i>Do you have to</i> stay at school for lunch? I <i>have to</i> wear a tie to work.

general recommendation (points to 'must' examples)

school rule (points to 'have to' examples)

company policy (points to 'have to' example)

Although *must* and *have to* are similar in meaning, their negative forms mean completely different things.

Negative forms		
Have no choice	<i>must not</i> (mustn't)	You <i>mustn't</i> leave your rubbish behind. (You have no choice but to take your litter with you.)
Have a choice	<i>do not have to</i> (don't have to)	A: Do I <i>have to</i> stay behind? B: No, you <i>don't have to</i> . (A can choose to leave or stay behind.)

We usually use *must* to talk about rules in formal writing.

- You *must* keep quiet in the library.
- You *must not* eat or drink in the library.

Let's compare

We use *should* / *must* / *have to* + base form of the verb to put forward a good idea or to talk about things that are necessary to do. Note the differences below.

Differences in meaning

I should go now. = I think it is a good idea to go now.

I must go now. = I strongly believe that I need to go now.

I have to go now. = I need to go for some reason. (e.g. I have a meeting to attend.)

Differences in form

We put the base form of the verb (e.g. *go*) after modals like *should* and *must*. We also never change the form of a modal (e.g. ~~X~~ *He musts go.*).

However, we can change the form of *have to*:

- He *had to* finish the work yesterday.
- Do we have to* get the permits?

PART 2 Talking about ability

We use the base form of the verb after *can*, *could* and *be able to*.

Present ability	Past ability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The baby <i>can</i> / <i>cannot</i> (<i>can't</i>) walk. A: <i>Can</i> Jones speak German after the course? B: Yes, he <i>can</i>. / No, he <i>cannot</i> (<i>can't</i>). I <i>am</i> (<i>not</i>) <i>able to</i> calculate large numbers in my head. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> He <i>could</i> / <i>could not</i> (<i>couldn't</i>) run a mile last year. A: <i>Could</i> you hit high notes before puberty? B: Yes, I <i>could</i>. / No, I <i>could not</i> (<i>couldn't</i>). Some countries <i>were</i> (<i>not</i>) <i>able to</i> cut their carbon emissions.

We form yes / no questions and short answers with *be able to* in the following ways.

Be	Subject	able to	Verb ... ?
<i>Am / Was</i>	<i>I</i>	<i>able to</i>	<i>do the splits?</i>
<i>Is / Was</i>	<i>he / she / it</i>		
<i>Are / Were</i>	<i>you / we / they</i>		



Yes,	<i>I</i>	<i>am / was.</i>
	<i>he / she / it</i>	<i>is / was.</i>
	<i>you / we / they</i>	<i>are / were.</i>

No,	<i>I</i>	<i>am not ('m not) / was not (wasn't).</i>
	<i>he / she / it</i>	<i>is not (isn't) / was not (wasn't).</i>
	<i>you / we / they</i>	<i>are not (aren't) / were not (weren't).</i>

Let's compare

Sometimes, we also use *can* and *could* to refer to the possibility instead of ability.

- You *can* get all kinds of sweets from this shop.
- Children *can* choke on the small parts of the toy.
- It's dangerous to wander in the forest. You *could* get lost and starve to death.

not certain but it is still possible to happen



Exercise 2.1

Circle the correct answers for the following sentences.

- Some ants (can / can't) withstand pressures up to 5,000 times their weight.
- That's cool! This printer (is able to / could) print 3D objects.
- (Can / Is) the concert hall hold 10,000 spectators?
- Eating too much fried food (can / is able to) cause cancers.
- We (are not able to / could not) make mobile payments in the past.
- The company (can / was able to) attract enough investors last year.
- The musicians (were able to / can) sight-read when they were young.
- How long (are / do) whales (can / able to) hold their breath?
- The plane (couldn't / was able to) land safely despite the horrible storm yesterday.
- (Are / Could) the scientists (be / able to) resurrect dinosaurs via cloning?
- Residents had to evacuate from the buildings because anything (could / was able to) happen after the earthquake struck.





Exercise 2.2

Ms Tong is writing an appraisal report for her employee. Complete the report using *can*, *could* or *able to* and the given verbs. Use the negative form where necessary.

Name: Lucy Wong

Position: Receptionist

Date: 10 August 20XX

answer

Customer Service:

cooperate

Last year, Lucy was (1) _____ not able to answer _____ clients' enquiries. She

cope

(2) _____ or distribute mail efficiently. She was (3) _____

direct

_____ phone calls accurately. Now, she (4) _____

forward

all these tasks independently. She is (5) _____ and welcome

get along

clients properly. Also, she (6) _____ visitors to the right place

greet

quickly. Lucy (7) _____ only Cantonese during the first year of

handle

work. She can now deal with overseas enquiries in fluent Mandarin and English.

Other areas:

perform

Lucy was (8) _____ with other members in her team.

speak

This year, she (9) _____ with them fully. When she just

started, she (10) _____ with stress. Now, she

sort

(11) _____ well under work pressure.

PART 3 Talking about permission, offers and requests

We use *can*, *could* or *may* to ask for and give permission. *Can* and *could* are more commonly used than *may*. We use *can* and *would* to make an offer.

- Thank you for your cooperation. You *can* / *could* / *may* leave now.
- I *would* like to have you for dinner this Friday.

✗ Yes, you could.

✗ No, you could not (couldn't).

	Permission	Offers
informal	<i>Can we sit here?</i>	<i>Can I help?</i>
↓	<i>Could I use your phone?</i>	
formal	<i>May I come in and wait?</i>	<i>Would you like some tea?</i>

We often use the following modals or phrases to make requests.

	Requests	Responses
informal	<i>Can / Could you call back later?</i>	Certainly. / Yes, sure. / Yes, of course. (natural expressions to mean Yes, you can. / Yes, I would.)
↓	<i>Would you take a photo of us?</i>	
formal	<i>Do / Would you mind waiting outside?</i>	No, not at all. / No problem. (= I don't mind.)

Use these expressions to avoid a direct no.





Exercise 3.1

Fill in the blanks using the given words. Complete the verbs. The first letter of each verb is given.

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Tom and Jim: _____ Can _____ we join _____ you for the road trip? | can could
may would
would you mind |
| Joseph: Yes, why not? | |
| 2. Tourist: _____ I g_____ the tourist map, please? | |
| Tourism Office: Sure, there you are. | |
| 3. George: _____ k_____ my luggage for a moment? | |
| Reception: Not at all. You may put it over there. | |
| 4. Ms Jones: _____ you please p_____ some coffee for our guests? | |
| Jack: Yes, sure. Let me get the cups. | |
| 5. Mrs Taylor: _____ my children g_____ on the roller coaster ride? | |
| Ride operator: No, they can't. They are too young. | |
| 6. Leo: Mum, _____ I g_____ you a hand with folding laundry? | |
| Mum: No worries. I can handle it. | |
| 7. Mr Brown: _____ w_____ the minutes for the meeting? | |
| Harry: I'm sorry that I can't. I'm busy now. | |
| 8. Cinema staff: _____ you s_____ me your identity card? | |
| Emily: Here you go. | |



Exercise 3.2

Ms Kwok and her class are going to play a traditional children's game. Complete their conversation with the help of the given words.

Ms Kwok: We're going to play a game. It's called tag. Have you heard of it?

Leo: No, (1) would you mind explaining (would you mind/explain) the game rules to us?

Ms Kwok: Not at all. You (2) _____ (can/form/group of five) first.

Amelia: (3) _____ (could/four of us/form) one group?

Ms Kwok: Well, (4) _____ (I/afraid not). There must be five people in each group. (5) _____ (do you mind/have) one more member in your group?

Amelia: No problem.

Ms Kwok: (6) _____ (would/please/gather) in front of that tree in five minutes?
(5 minutes later)



Mr Blind Man is a version of tag.

Ms Kwok: Before we begin, (7) _____ (may/have/ everyone's attention)? Let's decide who is going to be *it*. *It* then chases the others. *It* will try to tag you by touching you with a hand. The tagged player will become another *it*.

Leo: That sounds fun! Shall we start?

Grammar Wrap-up

Ms Cole is giving a rock climbing course. Complete the conversation by circling the best answers.

Ms Cole: Welcome to Adventure Gym! My name is Julia Cole. I'm your coach for this beginners' bouldering course. Before we start climbing, (1) anyone tell me what bouldering is?

James: It's a kind of free rock climbing without any use of ropes.

Ms Cole: Exactly. To begin, you (2) warm up first. This helps prevent injuries.

Philip: What kind of warm-up exercise (3) we take?

Ms Cole: We (4) do some jumping jacks, push-ups, lunges and squats now. Do them slowly or you (5) burn yourselves out before the climb. Shall we get moving?

Everyone: Certainly.

(10 minutes later)

Archie: (6) I get on the wall now?

Ms Cole: Not yet. (7) pass me the chalk over there? Rub some of it on your hands first. It helps keep your hands dry and improves your grip on the holds. After doing so, you can start by following the route with white rocks.

Andy: Archie (8) push himself up. (9) giving him some tips?

Ms Cole: No problem. You (10) use your toes instead of your midsoles, Archie. I (11) stand on the small holds using my toes at the beginning.

Andy: (12) I try too?

Ms Cole: Of course!



- (1) A. should
B. must
C. can

- (2) A. may
B. must
C. would

- (3) A. should
B. may
C. able to

- (4) A. are able to
B. have to
C. don't have to

- (5) A. would
B. could
C. are able to

- (6) A. May
B. Would
C. Must

- (7) A. Are you able to
B. Do you mind
C. Would you

- (8) A. isn't able to
B. may not
C. mustn't

- (9) A. Could you
B. Would you mind
C. May you

- (10) A. should
B. can't
C. have to

- (11) A. can't
B. couldn't
C. didn't have to

- (12) A. Must
B. Would you mind
C. May



Brain Breaks

What did the shy pebbles say?

Answer: We wished we were a little boulder.



Grammar in Pre-DSE Text Type

Theme: Precious things

Matilda is reading the FAQs on the website of the A+ Museum. Complete the FAQs by writing the letters (A–J) in the spaces provided.

Words by Theme



A+ Museum FAQs about Greek Antiques¹ Exhibition

What are the themes of the exhibition?

The exhibition showcases² precious³ antiques from ancient⁴ Greece. The collections⁵ tell fascinating war stories. (1) ____ F _____. Everyone will enjoy the experience.

Can I touch anything on show?

(2) _____. Thus, visitors can have a better understanding of the life of the Greeks 2800 years ago. (3) _____.

(4) _____?

Yes, photos and videos for personal use may be taken in the museum.

However, you must not use flash or tripods.



What are the opening hours?

The museum is open from 10 am to 5 pm from Tuesdays to Sundays. (5) _____ 30 minutes before the stated closing time. We are closed on Mondays, Christmas Eve and Lunar New Year's Eve.

(6) _____?

Yes, you can pre-book tickets online before your visit to avoid waiting in the queue. (7) _____.

(8) _____?

No, you may either bring the print-out of the ticket or show your ticket on a mobile device.

(9) _____ my own pushchair, wheelchair or wagon?

You may bring your own pushchair or wheelchair. You can also borrow wheelchairs on the day of your visit. Nevertheless, wagons are not allowed for the safety of visitors.

(10) _____?

Yes, you are welcome to bring your own food. (11) _____. (12) _____.

A. Can I bring my own food

G. However, you must not touch any objects on show

B. Can I pre-book a ticket before visiting the museum

H. You may also eat outdoors in our garden

C. Visitors must not enter the galleries

I. Can I take photos in the museum

D. May I bring

J. Do I have to print my e-ticket before I arrive

E. You can eat them at the lounge on level 3 of the museum.

K. We are able to display the collections in a more interactive way using technology.

F. You do not have to be a history buff⁶

L. You can also book tickets on-site

We use modals to talk about the following situations:



- You **should** take the red minibus. You **must** pay the exact fare. (advice and obligation)
- My cat **can** stand on its hind legs. It **could** mean that it feels threatened. (ability and possibility)
- **Can** I leave now? **Would** you please tell Mr Chan that I leave early? (permission, offers or requests)

Version 1

Mila is replying to the email from William, a teacher who needs advice on how to organise a school art exhibition. Read the email and pay attention to the underlined parts.

Subject: Re: How to organise a school art exhibition? Send

Hi William,

I'm glad to hear that you're going to organise your first art exhibition for charity in your school. It would be my pleasure to give you some tips.

First of all, **(1)** it is important to select the right artworks to display. This seems an easy task, but it can actually be quite challenging. **(2)** It is necessary to find a theme that relates to your students' artworks. Ms Nixon is very good at organising art shows. She is the curator of many famous art exhibitions. **(3)** She has the ability to offer you excellent advice. If you contact her, **(4)** please give her my regards.

After setting the date, time and venue, **(5)** don't forget to put the word out. There are different marketing strategies, such as promotional campaigns on social networks. Lion Rock College has just held a fabulous art show that has attracted a lot of attention. **(6)** Do you want me to introduce you to the art teachers there?

Third, make sure that the exhibition space is well set. **(7)** I strongly suggest you discuss some key questions in the committee meeting: Is it possible that we mount and frame the works professionally? Can we set the selling price of the framed works? Are we able to adjust the lighting? **(8)** Is it a good idea to designate space for a meet-and-greet area?

I hope you find this helpful. I'm coming to HK soon. **(9)** I'd like to stay in your place for a few days. What do you think? **(10)** Are you free to show me around at the weekend?

Best wishes,
Mila







More to take away

curator (n.) = a person who selects and presents items, such as pictures and music, for people to enjoy

Version 2

Rewrite the underlined parts in Version 1 using the correct form of the given words.

Subject: Re: How to organise a school art exhibition? Send    

Hi William,

I'm glad to hear that you're going to organise your first art exhibition for charity in your school. It would be my pleasure to give you some tips.

First of all, **(1)** you should select the right artworks to display (*should*). This seems an easy task, but it can actually be quite challenging. **(2)** _____
 _____ (*have to*) Ms Nixon is very good at organising art shows. She is the curator of many famous art exhibitions. **(3)** _____
 _____ (*be able to*) If you contact her, **(4)** _____ (*would*)?

After setting the date, time and venue, **(5)** _____
 _____ (*must*). There are different marketing strategies, such as promotional campaigns on social networks. Lion Rock College has just held a fabulous art show that has attracted a lot of attention. **(6)** _____
 _____ (*would*)

Third, make sure that the exhibition space is well set. **(7)** _____
 _____ (*must*): Is it possible that we mount and frame the works professionally? Can we set the selling price of the framed works? Are we able to adjust the lighting? **(8)** _____
 _____ (*should*)

I hope you find this helpful. I'm coming to HK soon. **(9)** _____
 _____ (*can*) **(10)** _____
 _____ (*would you mind*)

Best wishes,
 Mila

