



Chapter 10

Modals, Part 2

CHAPTER SUMMARY

OBJECTIVE: To learn additional uses of modal auxiliaries, as a continuation of Chapter 9.

APPROACH: The first half of this chapter concentrates on using modals to express suppositions and logical conclusions and relates modals to matters of time and duration. Then attention is paid to a few additional modal uses. The chapter leads to a summary chart of the information presented in Chapters 9 and 10 and review exercises on modal usage.

TERMINOLOGY: The term “degrees of certainty” is used with those modals that express the strength of a speaker’s belief in the sureness of what she / he is saying. In other grammar books, terms such as “logical possibility” or “degree of possibility” are used in discussions of these modal usages.

□ **EXERCISE 1.** Warm-up. Page 180
Time: 5 minutes

- Explain to students that an important use of modals is in supposing (or guessing) what happened when you can’t be 100% sure.
- Read the introductory paragraph about Ramon’s guitar to your students before proceeding with the warm-up.

CHART 10-1. Degrees of Certainty: Present Time. Page 180
Time: 10 minutes

The percentages presented are, of course, not exact. They show the relative strength of one’s certainty and can be very helpful to students.

Be sure to call students’ attention to the note about *maybe* and *may be*; confusing the two is a common written error for both native and non-native speakers.

- Using the name of a student in your class, especially if someone happens to be absent, write on the board an example similar to the one in the chart.
- Ask students to make guesses about where their missing classmate may be and/or why their missing classmate isn’t present.
- Write students’ guesses on the board, using the appropriate modals as you do so and underlining the

modals in each sentence. For example:

Mi-Hong is a good student who comes to class regularly. Today she is not in class. No one knows where she is.

Mi-Hong must have a good reason. 95% certainty
(We think she has a good reason for not being here because she is a good student.)

Mi-Hong may be sick today.

Mi-Hong might be in another city. 50% or less certainty

Mi-Hong could be at home studying for the TOEFL test.
(We really don’t know why she isn’t in class today, so the three previous sentences express a weak degree of certainty.)

- Go over the rest of the chart with students and discuss the notes.

□ **EXERCISE 3.** Let’s talk. Page 182
Time: 10 minutes

This exercise can be teacher-led as a quick follow-up to the discussion of Chart 10-1. It presents simple, everyday situations in which to practice using *must* to express logical conclusions.

- Have a student pantomime the action in an item first, and then lead the students through making a best guess. For example, in item 1:
You: *Oscar, please yawn.*
Oscar: (yawns)
You: *Oscar is yawning. Why do you think he is yawning, Abdul?*
Abdul: *He must be sleepy.*

Optional Vocabulary

shivering
goose bumps
fans

□ **EXERCISE 4.** Let’s talk. Page 182
Time: 10 minutes

- Point out that the answers in this exercise express less certainty than the answers in Exercise 3.
- Model or lead the exercise by taking the role of Speaker A.

- Encourage students to be as imaginative as possible with their responses, and ask related questions to promote new and related guesses. For example, for item 3:

Speaker A (You): *You all know I enjoy reading novels on my subway commute.*

Speaker (student): *You must have a book with you.*

CHART 10-2. Degrees of Certainty: Present Time Negative. Page 183 Time: 10–15 minutes

The percentages shown are not exact; they show only relative certainty.

Note that while *could* indicates less than 50% certainty (Chart 10-1), *couldn't* indicates 99% certainty. You can sympathize with your students' frustration about language. This discrepancy demonstrates that language does not always have logical or predictable structure.

- Write four categories and their explanations on the board:

100% sure = fact (no modal needed)

99% sure = couldn't/can't (speaker has a lot of evidence but is not 100% sure)

95% sure = must not (speaker has plenty of evidence but is less than 99% sure)

50% sure = may not/might not (speaker doesn't have evidence — all possibilities have equal likelihood)

- Now using information about students and their lives, create sentences with your class to illustrate each of the above categories.

- Underline the modal used in each case. For example:

There is an unpleasant ringing noise that everyone in class can hear.

It isn't a fire alarm because the fire alarm is much louder.

It couldn't be someone's cell phone because the noise is constant.

It must not be a watch because a watch's noise is too faint.

It may not be an alarm on someone's computer, but it could be.

- Go over the chart with students.

□ EXERCISE 7. Let's talk. Page 183

Time: 5 minutes

- Work through this exercise as a group, having students take turns reading A and B parts.
- Help students identify the appropriate degree of certainty by articulating the “evidence” for each logical conclusion.
- For example, with item 1, first ask students what *flunked* means and ask them what alternatives they may offer for Yuko's chronic failure:

You: *What are some other reasons that someone could repeatedly flunk quizzes or exams? Is it ever possible to study hard but still flunk tests? Are there other conclusions we can draw about Yuko?*

Possible alternative student responses:

Yuko must not be very good at this subject.

Yuko must not feel very satisfied with her progress.

Yuko might not be very good at test taking.

CHART 10-3. Degrees of Certainty: Past Time. Page 186 Time: 10–15 minutes

Note the parallels between the affirmative expressions in this chart and in Chart 10-1.

Then note the parallels between the negative expressions here and in Chart 10-2.

Point out to students that modal auxiliaries are very useful in communicating how one perceives situations for which 100% certain facts are not available. Other languages may use different kinds of expressions for these ideas, so English modals can be difficult to learn.

Again, because students have already explored degrees of certainty in the Charts, 10-1 and 10-2, they should be able to participate fully and give you example sentences.

- Write two main headings on the board: *Past Time: Affirmative* and *Past Time: Negative*.
- Remind students to turn back to Charts 10-1 and 10-2 frequently as the foundation laid in each of those charts is expanded here in the past tense.
- Under *Past Time: Affirmative*, write three degrees of certainty:

100% sure = fact = was

95% sure = must have been

50% sure = may / might / could have been

- Explain that the only difference in this modal form is that it is past, and that the modal itself is followed by *have been* + base verb.
- Write an example of 100% certainty on the board, and have students tell you what the corresponding 95% and 50% modals should be. For example, write:

Pablo wasn't in class yesterday. The day before yesterday he was complaining of allergies.

You: *If I know for a fact that the reason Pablo wasn't here was his allergies, what can I say?*

Students: *Pablo was sick.*

- Write this on the board, underlining the verb, and then continue to elicit from the class:

You: *Right, but if I am only 95% sure?*

Students: *Pablo must have been sick.*

- Write this on the board as above.

You: *Right, and what options do I have if I am really not sure why Pablo was out, and I hadn't overheard him complaining about allergies the last time he was in class? What can I say about Pablo's absence with 50% or less certainty?*

Students: *Pablo may have been sick.*

Pablo might have been sick.

Pablo could have been sick.

- Write all these options on the board, and encourage students to come up with more creative responses. For example:
He might have won a sudden trip to Las Vegas.
- Now follow the same approach for *Past Time: Negative*.
- Remember that there are four degrees of certainty with the negative and that the second category takes the form: *99% sure = couldn't have been / can't have been*
- Go over the remainder of the chart with students.

□ **EXERCISE 13.** Let's talk. Page 187
Time: 10 minutes

- This discussion can be teacher-led or you can put students in pairs or groups.

Have students take turns using modals to explain the likelihood that each one of the men got engaged.

Expansion: Ask students questions about their culture and expectations around becoming engaged in preparation for marriage. Though this topic may not readily elicit targeted modal usage, it is one that students tend to be interested in. As a five or ten-minute discussion, it can provide a much-needed break from degrees of certainty and modal usage, which students can find a bit abstract and challenging.

Possible questions include:

At what age do most people get engaged?

Do couples live with one another before becoming engaged?

Does the man generally ask the parents' permission before proposing to the woman?

In the United States, an engagement often includes a diamond ring and a romantic dinner for two. Is this also true in your country?

□ **EXERCISE 15.** Let's talk. Page 187
Time: 10 minutes

If you lead this exercise, take an active role, helping each dialogue develop in a fairly natural way.

- Say the first line to the class, using the name of a student.
- Wait for several students to give some good guesses, and write these on the board, particularly for the first item or example exchange.
- Then pose the *What if* question and wait for new responses.

CHART 10-4. Degrees of Certainty:
Future Time. Page 189
Time: 10–15 minutes

Of course, no one can be 100% sure about future events. But we can make promises with *will* and confident predictions (as in Chart 4-2 using *will*).

This chart is titled “future time,” but for convenience in section (b), the past forms *should have* and *ought to have* are included.

Compare *should have* meaning “unfulfilled expectation” with *should have* in Chart 9-8, meaning “hindsight advice.” The forms are identical, but the contexts modify the meanings.

- You can use the academic setting your students are in or recent events in the news to co-create example sentences on the board. For example, if students have a midterm or final coming up, choose that upcoming test to create example sentences.
- Using suggestions from students, create sentences to demonstrate each degree of certainty presented, and write each on the board under the appropriate heading.

□ **EXERCISE 19.** Looking at grammar.
Page 189
Time: 10 minutes

Learners may sometimes sound more assertive than they intend to if they use *will* instead of other “softer” modals. By pointing out the differences in degree and telling your students which modals a native speaker would use in various situations, you will help your students grasp these somewhat abstract uses.

- Discuss the fine line between *will* and *should / ought to*, as in item 2.

□ **EXERCISE 20.** Looking at grammar.
Page 190
Time: 10 minutes

Expansion: Have students create their own situation and related modal cues by looking at the five situations in Exercise 20. This can be assigned as homework, and then students can exchange and complete one another's situations.

□ **EXERCISE 21.** Listening. Page 192
Time: 10 minutes

Be sure to let students know that this exercise is a review of Chapter 9 and Charts 10-1 through 10-4.

- Before listening, model the reduced pronunciation of *may-uv*, *shouldn't-uv*, *could-uh*, *should-uh*, etc.
- With books closed, play the audio through once without stopping.
- Have students open their books and listen again as you pause after each sentence.
- Ask individual students to write their answers on the board, and discuss.
- Listen again to correct the answers.

CHART 10-5. Progressive Forms of Modals.
Page 193
Time: 10 minutes

Every progressive form must contain both a form of **be** and a verb + **-ing**.

Point out similarities and differences with other progressive verb forms:

Chart 2-2: present progressive (*is sleeping* vs. *might be sleeping*)

Chart 2-10: past progressive (*was sleeping* vs. *might have been sleeping*)

- Have students first think of someone in their lives who is not in the class. Possible examples are a student's parent, partner, spouse, child, or friend.
- Alternatively, you can pick one famous person for the whole class to discuss. Possible options are a famous movie star, political figure, athlete, or newsmaker.
- Ask students to imagine what the person *may be doing* or *must be doing*.
- Explain to students that if they have enough evidence, they can increase the level of certainty from **may** to **must** + **be** + **-ing**, and lead them through creating sentences. For example:

You: *It is morning here in the United States. Think of a friend or family member who is in your country right now and decide whether to use **may** + **be** + **-ing** or **must** + **be** + **-ing** to describe what he or she is doing right now. Be prepared to explain why you chose **may** or **must**.*

Students' responses:

Maria: *It is 11:00 A.M. now in Boston, but is 4:00 P.M. in Spain right now, so my mother may be preparing food for dinner later.*

Jin Baek: *It is midnight in Korea right now, and my father goes to sleep around 10:00 P.M., so he must be sleeping right now.*

- Write students' sentences on the board and underline or highlight the contrasting modals.
- Using the same approach, change the time from *right now* to *5:00 P.M. yesterday afternoon*, and have different students offer example sentences about a friend or family member.
- Explain that students need to change the modal forms to *may have been* + *-ing* or *must have been* + *ing* to reflect the degree of certainty about the past action in progress.

Students' responses:

Pierre: *When it was 5:00 P.M. yesterday afternoon here, it was already 10:00 P.M. in Paris, so my girlfriend could have been studying in her apartment or she might have been eating dinner at a restaurant.*

Kiri: *When it was 5:00 P.M. yesterday afternoon here in Boston, it was 4:00 A.M. the next morning in Bangkok, so my mother must have been sleeping.*

- Review the chart with your class and answer any further questions.

EXERCISE 24. Looking at grammar.
Page 193
Time: 10 minutes

- Call students' attention to the situations, and remind them that the progressive is necessary for all actions that either are in progress right now or were in progress at a specific point in time.

Optional Vocabulary

herd
hitchhiking

EXERCISE 27. Let's talk or write. Page 196
Time: 10 minutes

You may be surprised at how many different conjectures your class can have about this picture. By giving students ample time to study it first, they will feel equipped to make guesses using modals. Encourage students to incorporate all factual information into their guesses and use as specific vocabulary as they can.

- Ask students leading questions regarding the illustration.

Possible leading questions include:

What is your guess about the man at the front of the line?

What is he doing?

What is inside the envelope?

Why is the envelope so large?

What do you think the man's profession is?

Why is he at the post office at 3:00?

What is the woman behind him doing?

What do you think her profession is?

Expansion: Bring in photos depicting people in specific situations. Advertisements from business or travel magazines may be useful. The photos should have at least two or three people in the picture, and the context should be identifiable. Divide the class into groups of three or four and have each group write detailed conjectures about one of the photos. After they have done so, collect all the photos and tape them to the board or display them so that all students can see them easily. Now have each group read their set of conjectures, and have the other students identify which photo the piece describes.

EXERCISE 28. Let's talk. Page 196
Time: 10 minutes

- Give students time to read through the dialogue.
- Have a pair perform the dialogue using dramatic expression and tone of voice to ensure a lively class discussion.
- Encourage students to come up with as many variations as possible in answer to questions 1–5.

EXERCISE 29. Looking at grammar.

Page 197

Time: 10 minutes

This exercise reviews modals used to express degrees of certainty. Students should discuss their choices and reasoning process along the following lines.

- Have students complete the exercise in class.
- Then have students compare answers and justify their choices. For example, in item 1, the speaker is expressing a logical conclusion based upon the evidence that is available (i.e., that Jeff was offered a scholarship); the speaker believes that Jeff is a good student but does not know that with 100% certainty.

Optional Vocabulary

accurate
matter
settled
den

CHART 10-6. Ability: *Can* and *Could*.

Page 198

Time: 10–20 minutes

In (b): a common use of *can* is with non-progressive verbs of sense perceptions (see Chart 2-3, p. 15) that are not used in progressive tenses to express the idea of “in progress right now.”

Compare:

CORRECT: *I can't hear (right now) the lecture.*

INCORRECT: *I am not hearing. I don't hear.*

Pronunciation notes:

Can't has two acceptable pronunciations. Most Americans say /kaent/. But along the northern Atlantic coast, the pronunciation may be similar to the British /kant/.

Can also has two pronunciations. Before a verb, it is usually /ken/. In a short answer (*Yes, I can.*) it is /kaen/.

In typical intonation, *can't* is stressed and *can* is unstressed.

The modal *could* can be confusing. It has many uses, most of which are close to one another in meaning.

Compare the following:

I could run fast if I wanted to. (present / future contrary-to-fact conditional)

I could run* or *I could walk. (50-50 possibility, present / future)

You could run to improve your physical condition. (present / future suggestion)

To further complicate things, *could* meaning “past ability / possibility” occurs mostly in the negative:

I couldn't go to the meeting yesterday afternoon. I had a doctor's appointment.

However, one does not normally use *could* in the affirmative to indicate past possibility.

INCORRECT: ***I could go to the meeting yesterday afternoon. I'm glad I didn't miss it.***

Rather, one would use *be able to*, *manage to*, or just the simple past in this case.

CORRECT: ***I was able to go to the meeting yesterday afternoon.***

In sum, if the speaker is talking about an ability to perform an act at one particular time in the past, *could* is not usually used in affirmative sentences. Compare:

INCORRECT: ***Did you read about the mountain climbers? They could reach the top of Mount Everest yesterday.***

CORRECT: ***They were able to reach the top yesterday.***

They managed to reach the top yesterday.

They reached the top yesterday.

In negative sentences, however, there is no difference between using *could* and *was / were able to*:

They couldn't reach / weren't able to reach the top yesterday.

For an idea of how complicated and varied the meaning and use of *could* is, look it up in a dictionary such as the *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary*. *Could* in all of its aspects can be difficult to explain to learners, and doing so (for most learners) is not particularly helpful or necessary.

- Ask students to think about their own and their classmates' skills and abilities and to write a few sentences.
- While they are working, write the heading *Ability: Can and Could* on the board.
- Ask students to call out a few of their sentences, and put these sentences on the board under a subheading *present / future ability* and underline the modal. For example:
Paulo can juggle four oranges.
Martina can walk on her hands because she used to be a gymnast.
Valentina can speak Finnish.
- Now ask students to describe possibilities and opportunities they have currently. Explain that *can* doesn't just describe a skill, per se, but is also used to express possibilities.
- Write their sentences on the board under the subheading *present / future possibility*. For example:
I can attend English classes.
In Boston, I can visit famous universities.
Because I am not working these days, I can sleep late in the mornings.

- Explain that *can* is also used to indicate permission or agreement in informal situations, and write an example on the board. For example:

You can borrow my cell phone.

- Explain the past form of *can* is *could*. Under a subheading *past ability*, transform a few of the sentences students gave you earlier into past, asking them to imagine that the people no longer possess these skills.
- Write the transformed sentences on the board and underline the *could* form. For example:

Paulo could juggle four oranges.

Martina could walk on her hands.

Valentina could speak Finnish.

- Go over the remainder of the chart with students.

□ **EXERCISE 32.** Let's talk. Page 199
Time: 15–20 minutes

This exercise is a general review of the uses of *can* and *could*, comparing them with other modals. This speaking activity gives students plenty of opportunities to use the target grammar and discuss everyone's favorite topic, himself / herself, so allow students to take their time with this.

□ **EXERCISE 33.** Let's listen and talk.
Page 200
Time: 10–15 minutes

Prepare students for the exercise by asking them about their own abilities and telling them they will compare their abilities with the research presented in the audio.

Note how the definition of *can* changes with the age groups discussed in the audio. The college students *can*, in a literal sense, *dance*, *sing*, and *draw* (just as small children can), but not many define *can* as having a special skill rather than simply an innate ability.

There is no “correct” answer to the discussion questions. Responses will probably mention that children are less self-conscious than adults and more able to express themselves naturally through their movement.

- Prior to having students listen to the audio, ask them for a show of hands: *How many of you can dance? sing? draw?*
- Lead the discussion as it is intended: a short communication opportunity.
- Don't put too much emphasis on modal usage. If good modal usage occurs naturally and appropriately, that is great, but don't require or force it.

Expansion: You might also discuss how our innate artistic abilities to express ourselves may become suppressed as we get older. Explanations for this may include (and you can raise these if students don't themselves):

We gain an enhanced awareness and sensitivity to others' judgments as we age.

We set new standards for ourselves based on comparisons with others or adopted societal standards, etc.

CHART 10-7. Using *Would* to Express a Repeated Action in the Past. Page 200
Time: 10 minutes

Compared to *used to*, “habitual *would*” is somewhat more formal. *Would* is often preferred in writing, whereas *used to* may be preferred in speech.

Note the important limitation on *would*: it cannot express a situation, only an action.

This use of *would* is unusual in British English.

- Write the following heading on the board: *Would (instead of Used to) for Habitual Past Action.*
- Now ask three students to tell you something they used to do as children. It may help to specify a particular time in childhood (elementary school years, teenage years). For example:

You: Pablo, what did you used to do after school when you were a teenager?

Pablo: I used to play football every day.

You: Because Pablo is describing a past action (not a past situation), we can substitute “would” for “used to.”

- Write the new *would* sentence on the board as students produce it and dictate it to you.
Pablo would play football every day when he was a teenager.
- Go over the remainder of the chart with students.

□ **EXERCISE 35.** Looking at grammar.
Page 200
Time: 15–20 minutes

Optional Vocabulary

anthropology
archeological
expedition
arrowhead
unearthed

CHART 10-8. Expressing Preference:
Would Rather. Page 201
Time: 10–15 minutes

In a question, either the word *or* or the word *than* can follow *would rather*:

Would you rather eat fruit or candy?

Would you rather eat fruit than candy?

In a negative question, only the word *than* is possible for a preference:

Wouldn't you rather eat fruit than candy?

- Write the title of the chart on the board as a heading.
- Begin by asking students what activities they prefer or like better. For example:
Would you rather study modals or math?
Would you rather go out to eat than fix dinner at home?
- Write their answers on the board:
Vicenzo would rather study modals than math.
Fatima would rather go out to eat than fix dinner at home.
- In a similar fashion, illustrate past (*would rather have* + *past participle*) and progressive (*would rather* + *be* + *-ing*) form by using student-generated information.

EXERCISE 37. Looking at grammar.
Page 202
Time: 5 minutes

The contraction *'d* is often difficult to hear and may be difficult for some learners to pronounce. Sometimes students omit it because they don't hear it. Encourage students to use *'d* contractions in their spoken answers and correct their pronunciation.

EXERCISE 38. Let's talk: interview.
Page 202
Time: 10 minutes

In order to engage and support students, you might try a round-robin sequence like this:

Teacher to A: *What would you rather do than go to class?*

Speaker A: *I'd rather go bowling than go to class.*

Teacher to B: *What would you rather do than go bowling?*

Speaker B: *I'd rather play chess than go bowling.*

Teacher to C: *What would you rather do than play chess?*

CHART 10-9. Combining Modals
with Phrasal Modals. Page 202
Time: 10–15 minutes

Some other possible sequences in (c), with a phrasal modal combined with another phrasal modal are: *be supposed to be able to*, *have (got) to be able to*, *used to have to*, *used to be able to*, *didn't use to be able to*, *be going to have to*, *be supposed to have to*.

- Write the heading / chart title on the board.
- Explain to students that a modal cannot immediately be followed by another modal, and write on the board the incorrect example sentence (or one of your own devising, using students' information) from (a).
- Cross out the part that is incorrect and show that modals can be combined with other complete phrasal modals. For example:
Wei-Hsuan ~~won't able to~~ be able to come to class tomorrow.
- Go over the chart with students.

CHART 10-10. Summary Chart of Modals
and Similar Expressions. Pages 204–205
Time: varies

By the time students reach this chart, they should be familiar with its contents. It summarizes what they have been learning since the beginning of Chapter 9.

The term *similar expressions* in the chart title refers to phrasal modals.

- Tell students that you are not going to present this summary chart on the board the way you typically do, but that this is a reference chart that they should look at often.

EXERCISE 42. Let's talk. Page 206
Time: 10 minutes

In addition to a review of grammar, this kind of exercise provides students with the opportunity to develop their speaking skills by explaining something they already know and understand. It challenges students to express themselves in spoken English. Encourage students to invent possible contexts as a way of explaining differences in meaning.

In some items, there is no difference in meaning; in other items there are distinct differences in meaning. In still other items, there might be a subtle difference in politeness or in forcefulness.

- Tell students that all of the sentences in this exercise are grammatically correct.
- Ask leading questions to elicit student interpretations of meaning. Be prepared to rephrase your questions in many ways in order to prompt students' responses.

□ **EXERCISE 43.** Looking at grammar.
Page 207
Time: 10–15 minutes

- Tell students that they only have to think of one possible answer and not all the possibilities.

Optional Vocabulary

spring break	accompanied
compulsory	chaperone
cautious	

□ **EXERCISE 47.** Let's talk. Page 209
Time: 10–30 minutes

Sometimes students get rather excited about a particular topic and don't want to stop, so you may need to set a time limit. The given ideas are, for the most part, overstated generalizations of opinions that need to be qualified, explained, and supported. To conclude the exercise, you might ask the students to rewrite or expand on a sentence given in the textbook so that all members of the group agree with the idea, or you might have each group present several sides to the argument.

If these topics are unfamiliar or uncomfortable for your students, you might add some others that are closer to their immediate interests. Topics about their school, sports, clothing fashions, etc. may be productive. These topics can be used for a writing assignment.

Optional Vocabulary

influences
banned
censored
agencies

□ **EXERCISE 48.** Let's talk or write. Page 210
Time: 10–15 minutes

- Explain that a short paragraph should contain five to eight sentences.
- Remind students to begin with a topic sentence and that subsequent sentences should support this introductory one.
- Set a time limit for students and collect their work.
- When marking these paragraphs, focus on modals and verb tenses, and weight these target structures more heavily than non-target ones.