English Modal Verbs Chart: Meaning and Examples

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Meaning	Present / future	Past	Example
Ability	can, be able to	could, was able to	I can swim. I could read when I was four.
Permission	can, may, be allowed to	could, was allowed to	You can leave early today.
Request / offer	can, could, would, shall	—	Could you send it today? Shall I help?
Obligation	must, have to	had to	I have to renew my passport. I had to wait.
No obligation	don't have to, needn't	didn't have to, needn't have	You don't have to come if you're busy.
Prohibition	mustn't, can't	couldn't, wasn't allowed to	You mustn't park here.
Advice	should, ought to, had better	should have + past participle	You should see a doctor. I should have called.
Possibility	may, might, could	may / might / could have + past participle	She might be late. He might have missed it.
Deduction (sure)	must, can't	must have / can't have + past participle	He must be at home. She can't have forgotten.
Prediction	will, won't	would (future in the past)	It will rain later. He said it would rain.

Modal verbs have no -s (she can), no to after them (must go) and form questions without do (Can you...?). Have to and be able to behave like ordinary verbs.