

APC English

Verb Phrases & Modal Verbs

verb phrases

We have

1. Main verb
2. Helping (auxiliary) verbs
 - some helping verbs are called modal verbs

Helping verbs come before the main verb

Modal verbs come before any helping verbs and the main verb

[modal verb(s)] + [other helping verb(s)] + main verb(s)

verb phrases

Brave could have walked to school - both helping verbs

“I thought you might could help me.” - multiple modal verbs - not correct English

so, we need to understand

1. non-modal verbs that are helping verbs
2. modal verbs

modal verbs today

modals in verb phrases

can swim = ability

must finish = rule or obligation

should sleep = good idea

modal verbs

same or different?

Helping verbs are auxiliary verbs

Modal verbs are a type of helping / auxiliary verb

modal verbs

- can
- could
- may
- might
- shall
- should
- will
- would
- must

modal verbs

Modal verbs related to the main verb in a sentence to express a speaker's

- attitude
- necessity,
- possibility,
- probability,
- ability,
- permission,
- obligation, or
- requests.

modal verbs

Certainty

1. must You **must** be on time
2. can't You **can't** be late

modal verbs

Probability

1. must She **must** be at home by now
2. might She **might** be at home by now
3. may She **may** be at home by now
4. could She **could** be at home by now
5. can't She **can't** be at home by now

modal verbs

Deduction

1. must He's been studying all night; he **must** be tired
2. might He's been studying all night; he **might** be tired
3. can't He's been resting all day; he **can't** be tired

modal verbs

Request

1. could **Could** you please pass the salt?
2. would **Would** you please pass the salt?
3. can **Can** you please pass the salt?

modal verbs

Permission

1. may You **may** leave the table when you finish your dinner.
2. can You **can** go now.
3. can't You **can't** leave the table until you finish your dinner.
4. must You **must not** smoke in here
5. can't You **can't** smoke in here

modal verbs

Ability

1. can
She **can** speak three languages.
2. could
She **could** speak three languages by the time she left school

Necessity

1. must You **must** finish your homework before going out.
2. should You **should** finish your homework before going out.
3. have to You **have to** finish your homework before going out.
4. ought to You **ought to** finish your homework before going out.
5. need to You **need to** finish your homework before going out.

Can: Indicates ability, permission, or possibility.

- I can swim. (ability)
- Can I go to the party? (permission)

Could: Similar to "can" but often used for more polite requests or to express a possibility in the past.

- Could you help me, please?

Will: Expresses future actions, promises, or willingness.

- I will call you later.

Would: Often used to express politeness, make requests, or talk about hypothetical situations.

- Would you like some tea?

Shall: Used for suggestions, offers, or to indicate future events in formal English.

- Shall we go for a walk?

Should: Indicates advice, obligation, or expectation.

- You should study for the exam.

May: Indicates permission or possibility.

- May I use your phone? (permission)

Might: Similar to "may" but often implies a lower probability or is used to express a hypothetical situation.

- It might rain later.

Must: Expresses necessity or strong obligation.

- You must finish your homework.

Ought to: Similar to "should," expressing obligation or duty.

- You ought to apologize.

modal verb exercises

Exercise 1 – Gap Fill (Choose can, must, or should)

complete the sentences with can, must or should

1. You ____ eat breakfast every day.
2. He ____ ride a bike very well.
3. They ____ drink more water.
4. We ____ hurry. The bus is coming.
5. I ____ help my parents at home.
6. She ____ go to bed early tonight.
7. Students ____ be quiet in class.

Exercise 2 – Find the Verb Phrase

underline the verb phrase

1. He can cook dinner for his family.
2. She must wear a uniform at school.
3. They should go home early today.
4. I can play football after class.
5. You must finish homework before TV.
6. We can take a bus to school.
7. She should drink water every morning.

tip

1. find the main verb
2. what object / noun does this affect after the verb?
 - cook -> dinner
3. is there any helping verb(s) before the main verb

speaking exercises

listening exercise

there is one conversation

student A and student B

student A says lines 1,3,5,7,9, and 11

student B says lines 2,4,6,8,10

Exercise:

What verb phrases does the student say?

complete the conversation and note with verb phrases were mentioned

Tick the verb phrases you hear A say:

- eat outside
- cleaned my room
- met my cousin
- go shopping
- played badminton
- stayed at home
- visited my aunt
- studied English

Tick the verb phrases you hear B say:

- cooked dinner
- went to the market
- relaxed at home
- met a friend
- watched a movie
- went for a walk
- studied English
- ate at a café

complete the conversation and note the verb phrases that are mentioned

Student A (odd-numbered lines)

1. A: Hi! How was your weekend?

2. B: ...

3. A: Sounds exciting! On Saturday I met my cousin but I didn't have much time.

4. B: ...

5. A: Nice! On Sunday I played badminton with my cousin.

6. B: ...

7. A: Oh really? I wanted to go shopping, but it rained.

8. B: ...

9. A: Did you also eat outside on Sunday evening?

10. B: ...

Tick the verb phrases you hear B say:

- cooked dinner
- went to the market
- relaxed at home
- met a friend
- watched a movie
- went for a walk
- studied English
- ate at a café

complete the conversation and note the verb phrases that are mentioned

Student B (even-numbered lines)

1. A: ...
2. B: It was great! On Saturday I ate at a café in the morning. How about you?
3. A: ...
4. B: Later, I went to the market with a friend.
5. A: ...
6. B: Sunday I studied English for a few hours.
7. A: ...
8. B: Yes, but later I went for a walk because the weather got better.
9. A: ...
10. B: Yes, I did! And then I relaxed at home before going to bed.

Tick the verb phrases you hear A say:

- eat outside
- cleaned my room
- met my cousin
- go shopping
- played badminton
- stayed at home
- visited my aunt
- studied English

verb phrase +
modal verb
exercises

Exercise #1: Complete each sentence with a modal verb a, b or c?

1. ___ you speak any foreign languages?

- a. May
- b. Can
- c. Have

2. Liz ___ get tired of her job. It is so boring.

- a. has to
- b. must
- c. should

3. Where's Nick? He ___ be in his office.

- a. might
- b. mustn't
- c. is to

4. Take an umbrella. It ___ rain later.

- a. has to
- b. need
- c. might

5. Jack ___ go to hospital yesterday.

- a. must
- b. had to
- c. need

Exercise #1: Complete each sentence with a modal verb a, b or c?

6. You look tired. You ___ go to bed.

- a. should
- b. ought
- c. are to

7. You ___ do it. I've already done it.

- a. must not
- b. need not
- c. ought not

8. ___ it be true?

- a. Must
- b. May
- c. Can

9. ___ we stay or leave?

- a. Will
- b. Would
- c. Shall

10. Jane was so tired. She ___ have worked days and nights.

- a. should
- b. must
- c. need

Exercise #2: Complete each sentence with a modal verb, here are my suggestions:

	can't	can	couldn't	didn't
should	should	should	shouldn't	shouldn't
			couldn't	

1. It was very dark last night. I _____ see the man on the road.
2. He's not very strong. He _____ try to lift the box.
3. She's singing in the shower. I _____ hear her.
4. We must be home by ten o'clock. Perhaps we _____ go now.
5. Cigarettes are unhealthy. People _____ smoke them.
6. Your face is dirty. You _____ wash it.
7. That book doesn't belong to him. He _____ take it.
8. Emily's on a diet. She _____ eat that cake.
9. When I was young I _____ cook at all.
10. The speed limit is 50 km/hr in the city. You _____ slow down.

Exercise #3: Read the sentences and choose the correct modal verb from the list below to complete each blank.

Modal Verbs: can, could, will, would, should, may, might, must

On Saturday morning, Laura and Tom 1 _____ go for a hike in the mountains. Tom 2 _____ cook dinner tonight; he enjoys trying new recipes. Laura, you 3 _____ bring your camera; we might see some beautiful scenery. They 4 _____ start early if they want to reach the summit before sunset. Laura, you 5 _____ check the weather forecast before we leave.

Exercise #4: Degree of Certainty. Read the sentences and choose the correct modal verb from the list below to complete each blank.

Modal Verbs: can, could, will, would, should, may, might, must

1. It's 10:30, and Sarah isn't here yet. She _____ have forgotten about the meeting.
2. The test is challenging, but if you study hard, you _____ pass with flying colours.
3. I heard a noise outside. It _____ be the neighbours playing music loudly again.
4. Mark is a very able person; he _____ finish the report by himself
5. My parents _____ let me go to the concert if I finish my homework early.

Exercise #5: Read the conversation and choose the helping verbs from the list below to complete each blank.

can can haven't may must have should should

1. A: Hi, I heard you're planning a trip to Paris.
B: Yes, I'm excited! I _____ book the flights yet, but I'm thinking of going next month.
2. A: I can't find my keys anywhere.
B: You _____ left them in the car. I remember you had them when we parked.
3. A: I have an important job interview tomorrow.
B: You _____ wear something professional and be well-prepared. Confidence is key.
4. A: I'm not sure if I _____ make it to the party on time.
B: Don't worry. If you're running late, you _____ always call and let them know.
5. A: The weather forecast says it _____ rain later.

Exercise #5: Read the conversation and choose the helping verbs from the list below to complete each blank.

can can haven't may must have should should

1. A: Hi, I heard you're planning a trip to Paris.
B: Yes, I'm excited! I **haven't** book the flights yet, but I'm thinking of going next month.
2. A: I can't find my keys anywhere.
B: You **must have** left them in the car. I remember you had them when we parked.
3. A: I have an important job interview tomorrow.
B: You **should** wear something professional and be well-prepared. Confidence is key.
4. A: I'm not sure if I **can** make it to the party on time.
B: Don't worry. If you're running late, you **can** always call and let them know.
5. A: The weather forecast says it **may** rain later.

Thank you!
any questions?