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APC English

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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
2. can't

You **must** be on time

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
2. would
3. can

Could you please pass the salt?

Would you please pass the salt?

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
2. could

She **can** speak three languages.

She **could** speak three languages by the time she left school

modal verbs

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?

modal verbs

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

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

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: ...

complete the conversation and note the
verb phrases that are 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

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.

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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.

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Thank you!
any questions?