**MODAL VERBS**

1. **CAN, COULD, BE ABLE**

* Can combines the ideas of possibility and ability. Be able is possible instead of can, but can is more usual. Can has only two forms: can (present) and could (past). So to be able to is sometimes used to replace the missing tense-forms.
* With reference to the past could is used to say that someone had the general ability to do something.

He could speak three foreign languages.

* When it is necessary to emphasize that someone managed to do something in one particular situation, was/were able to is used.
* The negative couldn't is possible in all situations.

The fire spread quickly but everyone was able to escape.

She can (is able to) speak two foreign languages. (mental ability, capability)

They spoke in low voices and she couldn't hear what they were talking about. (physical ability)

You can buy paper and pencils at the stationer's. (possibility)

I can't wait any longer. My class starts in 5 minutes. (absence of possibility)

I could swim when I was 5.

David wasn't able to play in the match yesterday. He had hurt his leg.

If you take a taxi you will be able to catch the train.

1. **CAN*,***COULD, MAY, WOULD

* **May,** like **can**, denotes possibility.

*You may find his number in the telephone book.*

* May, can, could are used to express a request or to ask for permission. In the latter meaning can is used informally, especially if the speaker is talking to someone she/he knows fairly well. It is usually not considered as polite as may or could, which are equally polite.

*Can (could) you do me a favour?* (request)

*Can (could) you tell me the way to the nearest post-office?* (request)

*Can (could, may) I use your phone?* (asking for permission)

*Can (could, may) I borrow your dictionary?* (asking for permission)

*May I keep the dictionary till Monday? No, you may not*. (negative reply to a request for permission with *may)*

* Would (you) is used to express a polite request. The difference between Would (you) and Could (you) in this meaning is slight. Compare, e.g.

*Would/could you pass me the salt, please?*

* Would also expresses an offer.

*Would you like to join us?*

*Would you like me to give you a lift?*

*Would you like a cup of coffee?*

1. **MUST, TO HAVE TO, TO BE TO**

* Must and have to both express necessity or obligation. Must is usually stronger than have to and can indicate urgency. On the other hand, must is used to express necessity from the speaker's point of view, while have to expresses necessity imposed by circumstances and is rendered into Russian as приходится, вынужден.

I must write to Ann. I haven't written to her for ages.

Ann's eyes are not very good. She has to wear glasses.

In negative sentences to have to denotes absence of necessity.

It's my day off so I didn't have to get up early.

* To be to is used to express obligation resulting from an arrangement.

We are to discuss it next week.

You work too much. You must have a rest.

I had to take a taxi to be in time for the appointment.

I didn't have to walk. A friend of mine gave me a lift.

Did you have to change trains?

You don't have to stay late. The work isn't urgent.

We are to sign the contract on Tuesday.

1. **MUSTN'T (MUST NOT) AND NEEDN'T (NEED NOT)**

* Mustn't (must not) is used to express prohibition and is translated into Russian as нельзя.

The baby is asleep. You mustn't shout. (Do not do this!)

* Needn't (need not) + the infinitive without to is used to express lack of necessity.

You needn't say anything if you don't want to.

I can hear you quite well. You needn't shout.

* Note that needn't (not mustn't) is used in a negative answer to a question with must. Compare, e.g.

Must I return the books today? — Yes, you must.

Must I return the books today? — No, you needn't. You can do it tomorrow.

* Note also that the verb need can be used as a notional verb, i.e. with an infinitive with to following it, and the auxiliary do/does in interrogative and negative sentences.

He has left the army and doesn't need to wear a uniform any more.

Do we need to take a bus to get to the bank?

1. **MUST AND MAY**

* Must is used to express a strong degree of certainty about a situation. May expresses uncertainty and doubt.

You've been travelling all day. You must be tired. (I am sure that you are tired.)

Ann isn't at home. She may be at the office. (Perhaps she is at her office.)

1. SHOULD AND OUGHT TO

* **Should** and **ought to** are very similar in meaning. They are both used to talk about **obligation and duty**, **to give advice,** and to say what **we** think it – it is for people to do.

*You ought to/should read this story. It's great fun.*

* There is sometimes a small difference. Should or ought are used when talking about one's own feelings, but ought is preferable when talking about "outside" rules, laws, moral duties, etc.

*John ought to visit his parents more often.*

*You should think over this offer once more before rejecting it.*

*You've been coughing a lot recently. You shouldn't smoke so much.*

***I*** *think Tom should accept the job offer.*

***I*** *don't think you should work so hard.*

*They ought to ban smoking in public places.*

***I*** *ought to do more exercise. My doctor says* ***I****'m very unfit.*