

# Modal Verb Exercises I

Fill in the blanks in each sentence using a modal verb, such as *can, could, would, should, might, may, must, or have to*, based on the situational hints shown in italics. Select the modal that seems most appropriate for the situation described, and be prepared to explain your choice.

1. I ..... not know what to say to him if he showed up.  
*(I'm unprepared to speak to him.)*
2. She ..... look at things differently once the facts are in.  
*(A change in opinion is possible after all the information becomes available.)*
3. It's company policy; you ..... do it this way or your expenses won't be reimbursed.  
*(The company requires that this procedure be followed for expense reimbursements.)*
4. I'm in terrible shape! I ..... exercise more!  
*(I've decided that more exercise is an absolute necessity for me.)*
5. .... you get this report done for us by tomorrow morning?  
*(Are you willing and able to prepare this report by tomorrow if we ask you?)*
6. .... you handle this much work on a regular basis?  
*(Do you have the capacity to handle this much work regularly?)*
7. We were worried about you. You ..... have called us as soon as you knew you'd be late.  
*(Calling someone when you will be late is a good idea, in my opinion.)*
8. You ..... want to think a little more carefully about that before trying it next time.  
*(I think you were stupid not to think more carefully about it.)*
9. This computer's not working. It ..... have been damaged by the thunderstorm.  
*(The damage is a logical deduction based on the information available.)*
10. Ellen ..... be sent to London this summer, if the board decides that the situation there warrants it.  
*(The trip is certainly possible, but whether or not she goes depends on the board's preference.)*
11. My trainer says I'm in terrible shape. According to him I ..... exercise more.  
*(My trainer is trying to compel me to exercise more.)*
12. You ..... always try reinstalling Windows, that might work if the disk is corrupt.  
*(This is one possible course of action, and there's a possibility of it working under certain conditions.)*
13. I ..... not do that if I were you!  
*(I don't think your behavior is prudent, and my own normal behavior is different.)*
14. When she was young, she ..... play tennis every single day, rain or shine.  
*(She did this habitually when she was young, although she doesn't necessarily do it now.)*
15. .... I suggest this dark blue jacket?  
*(You're a customer in my upscale store, and I'm trying to be very polite.)*
16. I ..... admit, it's a very nice-looking car.  
*(I have no choice but to admit that the car looks nice.)*
17. She ..... admit that it was a very nice-looking car.  
*(She had no choice but to admit that the car looked nice.)*
18. I ..... think not!  
*(I find that absolutely impossible to believe.)*
19. .... we be required to ditch the aircraft, there are flotation devices under your seats.  
*(There are live-saving devices under your seats for use if we ditch in water.)*
20. You ..... say that.  
*(That's another correct way of summarizing the situation.)*

# Modal Verb Exercises I - Key

**These are the most likely choices for the modal verbs. When more than one is listed, they are listed in order of decreasing politeness and/or increasing probability. In some cases there may be other answers besides those shown here, although not usually without a significant change in meaning.**

1. I **would** not know what to say to him if he showed up.  
*(I'm unprepared to speak to him.)*
2. She **Might/May** look at things differently once the facts are in.  
*(A change in opinion is possible after all the information becomes available.)*
3. It's company policy; you **have to** do it this way or your expenses won't be reimbursed.  
*(The company requires that this procedure be followed for expense reimbursements.)*
4. I'm in terrible shape! I **must** exercise more!  
*(I've decided that more exercise is an absolute necessity for me.)*
5. **Could** you get this report done for us by tomorrow morning?  
*(Are you willing and able to prepare this report by tomorrow if we ask you?)*
6. **Can** you handle this much work on a regular basis?  
*(Do you have the capacity to handle this much work regularly?)*
7. We were worried about you. You **should** have called us as soon as you knew you'd be late.  
*(Calling someone when you will be late is a good idea, in my opinion.)*
8. You **might** want to think a little more carefully about that before trying it next time.  
*(I think you were stupid not to think more carefully about it.)*
9. This computer's not working. It **must** have been damaged by the thunderstorm.  
*(The damage is a logical deduction based on the information available.)*
10. Ellen **may** be sent to London this summer, if the board decides that the situation there warrants it.  
*(The trip is certainly possible, but whether or not she goes depends on the board's preference.)*
11. My trainer says I'm in terrible shape. According to him I **have to** exercise more.  
*(My trainer is trying to compel me to exercise more.)*
12. You **could** always try reinstalling Windows, that might work if the disk is corrupt.  
*(This is one possible course of action, and there's a possibility of it working under certain conditions.)*
13. I **would** not do that if I were you!  
*(I don't think your behavior is prudent, and my own normal behavior is different.)*
14. When she was young, she **would** play tennis every single day, rain or shine.  
*(She did this habitually when she was young, although she doesn't necessarily do it now.)*
15. **Might/May/Could/Can** I suggest this dark blue jacket?  
*(You're a customer in my upscale store, and I'm trying to be very polite.)*
16. I **must** admit, it's a very nice-looking car.  
*(I have no choice but to admit that the car looks nice.)*
17. She **had to** admit that it was a very nice-looking car.  
*(She had no choice but to admit that the car looked nice.)*
18. I **should** think not!  
*(I find that absolutely impossible to believe.)*
19. **Should** we be required to ditch the aircraft, there are flotation devices under your seats.  
*(There are live-saving devices under your seats for use if we ditch in water.)*
20. You **could** say that.  
*(That's another correct way of summarizing the situation.)*