

# Modals, semi-modals and similar verbs: past

CATEGORY	MODALS	SEMI-MODALS & SIMILAR VERBS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ base form/perfect base form</li> <li>invariable</li> <li>work as auxiliaries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ base form</li> <li>variable</li> <li>do not work as auxiliaries</li> </ul>
Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>COULD</b> + base form &gt; I <i>couldn't speak</i> French when I was 12.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>BE ABLE TO</b> (past tense) + base form &gt; I <i>wasn't able to understand</i> the details of the project.</li> </ul>
Possibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>COULD</b> + base form &gt; I <i>couldn't enter</i>: there were no available tickets for the fair.</li> </ul>	
Probability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>COULD</b> + perfect base form &gt; We <i>could have got</i> a better discount if we had asked.</li> <li><b>MAY/MIGHT</b> + perfect base form &gt; The delivery <i>may/might have been</i> delayed because of the strike, but it wasn't.</li> </ul>	
Advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>SHOULD/UGHT TO</b> + perfect base form &gt; What <i>should we have done</i> with this PC? We <i>ought to have had</i> it repaired.</li> </ul>	
Permission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>COULD</b> + base form &gt; <i>Could I use</i> your drill?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>BE ALLOWED TO</b> (past tense) + base form &gt; <i>Were we allowed to use</i> robotic arms to assembly the parts of the cars?</li> </ul>
Prohibition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>COULDN'T</b> + base form &gt; You <i>couldn't use</i> the photocopier because you didn't have your badge with you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>NOT BE ALLOWED TO</b> (past tense) + base form &gt; The employees <i>weren't allowed to ask for</i> a pay rise.</li> </ul>
Obligation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>HAVE TO</b> (past tense) + base form &gt; We <i>had to fill in</i> the order form online.</li> </ul>
Lack of obligation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>NEEDN'T</b> + perfect base form &gt; They <i>needn't have replied</i>, there was an automatic service that did it. (They replied because they didn't know it was unnecessary)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>DID NOT NEED TO</b> + base form &gt; They <i>didn't need to reply</i>, there was an automatic service doing it. (They didn't reply because they knew it was unnecessary)</li> <li><b>NOT HAVE TO</b> (past tense) + base form &gt; They <i>didn't have to send</i> the order of metal sheets yesterday because they put off the deadline.</li> </ul>
Necessity		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>HAVE TO</b> (past tense) + base form &gt; Before repairing the radiator, they <i>had to check</i> the entire engine.</li> <li><b>NEED TO</b> (past tense) + base form &gt; They <i>had to buy</i> a gasoline car, because their electric car <i>needed to be</i> recharged continuously.</li> </ul>
Deduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>MUST</b> + perfect base form &gt; The carrier <i>must have had</i> some problems, it isn't late, usually.</li> <li><b>CAN'T</b> + perfect base form &gt; It <i>can't have been</i> our truck to break down, it's new!</li> </ul>	

### 34 Say if the verbs in *italics* in these sentences are correct (✓). If not (X), correct them.

1. We *weren't allowed to eat* in the laboratory because it is always forbidden. ☐ .....
2. There was a big hailstorm last night. All our cars *might have be damaged*. ☐ .....
3. Though there were plenty of people at the fair, we *were able see* the new mobile robots. ☐ .....
4. If they had helped him, he *could has repaired* the computer in time. ☐ .....
5. You *can't saw* Mr Winston at the bank this morning, he was here with me. ☐ .....
6. How could you finish the report on your own? It *must have taken* you a long time! ☐ .....
7. What *could we have done* for the environment? We *might have burn* fewer fossil fuels, for example. ☐ .....
8. People *should has recycled* more instead of throwing things away. ☐ .....

### 35 Choose the most appropriate option.

1. Considering the different possibilities and their decision, they *should / must / needn't* have found the perfect material to use.
2. Despite the terrible noise in the factory, I *was able to / could to / might* work on my laptop for a couple of hours.
3. That project was really interesting, you *may / shouldn't / mustn't* have rejected it.
4. *Did you have / Had you / Needed you* to interview all those candidates?
5. The public *can't have attend / couldn't to attend* / *weren't allowed to attend* the conference on the greenhouse effect if they didn't show the invitation.
6. We *needn't to ask / needn't have asked / didn't have to ask* for a price list as we had already received it.
7. Mr Travis hasn't come to work yet. He has never been late for work. He *must / can't / should* have missed the bus.
8. Tom *can't / must / might* have written this application letter because it is in French, and Tom doesn't know French.

### 36 Rewrite the sentences using modals in the past.

1. She knew everything about our plans. She had certainly listened to our conversation.  
.....
2. He looked so tired when I saw him. I'm not sure but probably he had worked longer hours.  
.....
3. Mr White has bought a Porsche! I'm sure he has won the lottery.  
.....
4. I called Mr Tomson in his office, but the telephone was possibly out of order.  
.....
5. You came to the office unnecessarily. It was a public holiday.  
.....
6. It was a public holiday so I didn't go to work.  
.....

