



CATEGORIES OF MODAL VERBS

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: May 28 th 2023 Accepted: June 26 th 2023 Published: July 30 th 2023	This essay explores the three main categories of modal verbs: ability, possibility, and necessity. It discusses how these categories express different attitudes and viewpoints towards actions or events. The essay provides examples and explanations for each category, highlighting the usage of common modal verbs such as 'can,' 'could,' 'may,' 'might,' 'must,' 'should,' 'ought to,' and 'have to.' It emphasizes that modal verbs do not change based on the subject and are followed by the base form of the main verb, except for 'ought to' and 'have to.' Understanding the categories and usage of modal verbs is crucial for effective communication in English.

Keywords: Modal verbs, ability, possibility, necessity, attitudes, viewpoints, usage.

Modal verbs are a specific type of auxiliary verb that express modality, which refers to the speaker's attitude or viewpoint towards an action or event. They play a crucial role in English grammar, as they help convey various meanings and shades of meaning. Modal verbs are divided into three main categories: ability, possibility, and necessity.

The first category of modal verbs is ability. These verbs indicate the capacity or capability to perform an action. The most common modal verbs in this category are 'can' and 'could.' 'Can' is used to express present ability, while 'could' is used to express past ability. For example, "I can swim" means that I have the ability to swim, while "I could swim when I was younger" implies that I had the ability to swim in the past. Other modal verbs that fall into this category include 'may' and 'might,' which also express the possibility of being able to do something.

The second category of modal verbs is possibility. These verbs indicate the likelihood or probability of an action or event occurring. The primary modal verb in this category is 'may,' which suggests a higher level of possibility. For example, "It may rain tomorrow" means that there is a chance of rain happening. On the other hand, 'might' implies a lower level of possibility. For instance, "I might go to the party tonight" suggests that there is a smaller chance of attending the party. Other modal verbs in this category include 'could,' 'can,' and 'might,' which can also be used to express possibility in certain contexts.

The third category of modal verbs is necessity. These verbs indicate obligation, requirement, or

necessity. The most common modal verb in this category is 'must.' For example, "You must study for the exam" implies that studying is necessary or obligatory. 'Should' is another modal verb that expresses a lesser degree of obligation. It suggests that an action is advisable or recommended but not mandatory. For instance, "You should exercise regularly for good health." Other modal verbs in this category include 'ought to' and 'have to,' which also convey a sense of necessity or obligation.

It is important to note that modal verbs do not have different forms for different subjects. They remain the same regardless of the subject of the sentence. Additionally, modal verbs are always followed by the base form of the main verb without 'to,' except for 'ought to' and 'have to,' which are followed by the base form with 'to.'

In conclusion, modal verbs are categorized into three main groups: ability, possibility, and necessity. Ability modal verbs express the capacity or capability to perform an action, while possibility modal verbs indicate the likelihood or probability of an event occurring. Necessity modal verbs convey obligation, requirement, or necessity. Understanding these categories and their usage is essential for effectively expressing various attitudes and viewpoints in English.

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