RULE SHEET

Modal verbs and their substitutes



Modal verbs (can, could, may, must, mustn't, needn't) have no -s and no future form. Only can has a past form: could. For other tenses, use a **substitute**: be able to, be allowed to, have to.

modal verb	meaning	substitute (present)	past	future
can	ability	am / is / are able to	could / was / were able to	will be able to
can, **may**	permission	am / is / are allowed to	could / was / were allowed to	will be allowed to
must	it is necessary	have / has to	had to	will have to
mustn't	it is not allowed	am not / isn't / aren't allowed to	couldn't / wasn't / weren't allowed to	won't be allowed to
needn't	it is not necessary	don't / doesn't have to	didn't have to	won't have to

Examples

- I **can't** come now, but I **will be able to** come at six.
- When I was five, I **could** swim. Last summer I **was able to** climb a mountain.
- **May** I go out? – Yes, you **are allowed to** go out until nine.
- Hana **has to** practise every day. Yesterday she **had to** practise for two hours.
- You **mustn't** run here. = You **aren't allowed to** run here.
- You **needn't** bring food. = You **don't have to** bring food.

Watch out! After a modal verb comes the base form without **to**: She **can swim**. (not: She can to swim.) There is no will can or will must: use **will be able to** and **will have to**. The past of must is **had to**. **mustn't** ≠ **don't have to**: You mustn't go. (= Don't go!) You don't have to go. (= It is not necessary.)

PRACTICE 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Modal verbs: meanings and forms

1 Match the modal verb and its substitute. Write the letter.

1. ☐ can (ability)
2. ☐ can / may (permission)
3. ☐ must
4. ☐ mustn't
5. ☐ needn't

a. have to
b. don't have to
c. be able to
d. not be allowed to
e. be allowed to
f. be going to

2 Tick the correct modal verb or substitute.

1. Yesterday Omar _____ go to the dentist. ○ must ○ had to ○ has to
2. Last year Ava _____ swim 25 metres. Now she can swim 200 metres.
   ○ can ○ could ○ will be able to
3. Next year Ruby _____ ride her bike to school on her own. She is having cycling lessons now. ○ will be able to ○ was able to ○ were able to
4. _____ I borrow your ruler, please? ○ May ○ Have ○ Am
5. In the 1980s children _____ use calculators in maths tests.
   ○ weren't allowed to ○ aren't allowed to ○ won't be allowed to
6. You _____ bring a pen. I've got lots. ○ mustn't ○ needn't ○ can't
7. Omar's school starts at eight, so he _____ get up at seven.
   ○ have to ○ has to ○ having to
8. Shh! You _____ talk in the exam room. ○ mustn't ○ don't have to ○ needn't