Unit four

Modal verbs 2

Entry test

1 Fill each of the gaps with a suitable word or phrase.

EXAMPLE: Despite all our encouragement, the horse *would not come* out of the box.

a I really .... you back soon, I promise.
b Rather annoyingly, my teenage son .... insist on playing loud music first thing in the morning.
c My grandfather always .... think that reading books was a waste of time.
d You .... a hand, could you?
e If I were to pay you more, ... to do the job then?
f Would .... as to pass me that spanner?

SCORE

FOR *WILL*, *WOULD* AND OTHER MODALS EXPRESSING INTENTION, WILLINGNESS, FREQUENCY AND HABIT, SEE SECTION 1.

2 Fill the gaps with a suitable word or phrase.

EXAMPLE: I might *be able to* try and sort things out, if I get time.

a Unfortunately, I .... to get what I wanted in the supermarket.
b I'd like .... to cook as well as my father.
c My mother .... me some money if she'd wanted to, but she didn't.
d Even if I had known what time you were arriving, I .... get to the station to meet you.
e The students asked if .... let off lessons that afternoon.
f I wonder .... have everybody's attention for a moment, please.

SCORE

FOR *CAN*, *COULD* AND OTHER MODALS EXPRESSING ABILITY AND PERMISSION, SEE SECTION 2.

3 Fill each of the gaps with a suitable word or phrase.

EXAMPLE: If you ask me, we *ought to have got* there by now: we must be lost.

a I don't really think it is absolutely .... all of us should be there.
b We cleared all the furniture off the balcony for .... should rain in the night.
c Just in .... should think that the job is finished, may I point out that there's all the washing-up to do.
d It won't last more than about half an hour, I .... imagine.
e That was a close shave: it .... complete disaster if she'd found out.
f You really .... me you weren't going to be there: I waited for you for ages.
g It turns out we .... about missing your appointment as it's not until next week.
h By the time we land, I reckon we .... in the air for about fourteen hours.

SCORE

FOR SPECIAL USES OF *SHOULD* AND MODALS IN THE PAST, SEE SECTION 3.

TOTAL SCORE

THE BASICS

For basic grammar information for modals, see Unit 3, The Basics.

MAIN FUNCTIONS OF MODALS 2

Here is a list of uses dealt with in this Unit. For other uses, see Unit 3, The Basics.

Intention, willingness See Section 1

I **will** finish this, I promise.
The horse **wouldn't** jump the fence.
I'll resist their attempts to take over for as long as I have to.
If you **would** step this way.
Shall I help, or can you manage?
I'll give you a hand with that.
You **couldn't** give me a hand, **could** you?

Frequency, habit See Section 1

He **will** often stop to chat and see how we are.
When I was at university, I **would** sometimes work all night.
I **used to** love cooking, but I never get the time nowadays.

Ability See Section 2

Can you swim? I **could** if I tried.
They thought they **could** persuade me, but they **can't**.

Permission See Section 2

May I go? Yes, of course you **can**.
Could I possibly use your phone? I'm sorry, you **can't**.

Special uses of *should* See Section 3

I suggested they **should** try again later.
I **should** imagine we'll be home in time for dinner.

(For an alphabetical list of modals with their meanings, see pages 64–67.)

watch out!

Key difficulties with meanings:
• The same modal can express different meanings or perform different functions:
*You **must** phone me as soon as you get back.* (= giving orders)
*He's not here – he **must** have left.* (= deduction)
• Different modals can express similar meanings:
***Shall** I carry that for you?* (= willingness)
***Would** you like me to carry that for you?* (= willingness)
• The exact meaning can change according to context or intonation:
***Would** you open the window for me, please?* (= polite request)
***Would** you stop making that noise immediately!* (= order)
• Modals can affect the level of formality and politeness (see Section 2):
***May** I leave early today? Of course you **can**.*
***Could** I possibly use your phone?*
*I wonder if I **might** have your attention for a moment.*
• A sentence can have two possible meanings according to the way it is spoken, or the knowledge people have of the situation:
*You **might have** told me.* (= 'Perhaps you did, I can't remember' or: 'Why didn't you? You should have')

He **might have** told me he'd be late.

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