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| **MODALS AND ASSOCIATED VERBS** | | |
| **VERB** | **USE** | **EXAMPLE** |
| **BE ABLE TO** | Ability / Capability  (past, present, future | After the operation John was able to walk again.(single past occasion)  I’m able to play tennis twice a week. (circumstances permit me to do this)  I will be able to visit Paris next year. (nothing should prevent me from doing this) |
| **MANAGE TO** | Ability / Capable of doing something with a degree of difficulty  (past, present, future) | I managed to get two tickets for the concert. (a degree of difficulty was involved)  I manage to play tennis twice a week.  I hope you will manage to come. (even though you may encounter difficulty in doing this) |
| **CAN** | Ability / Capability  (present) | I can swim. |
| Permission | You can go to the cinema. |
| Possibility | Smoking can cause cancer. |
| Request | Can I have a biscuit, please? |
| Offer | Can I help you, madam? |
| Negative deduction (present) | You can’t be hungry, you have just eaten two pizzas. |
| Prohibition | You can never tell anyone. |
| **COULD** | Ability / Capability  (past) | I could swim when I was seven. |
| Permission | We could go to the cinema once a week. |
| Possibility | This vase could be very valuable. |
| Request | Could I use your phone, please? |
| Offer | Could I be of any help? |
| Suggestion | You could buy Mary some flowers. |
| Negative deduction (past) | It couldn’t have been John because he has an alibi. |
| **MAY** | Permission | You may leave the room. |
| Possibility | He may be waiting for us when we arrive. |
| Request | May I use your phone, please? (formal request) |
| Offer | May I help you, sir? |
| Prohibition | You may not use this computer. |
| Speculation | John may have gone to Spain. |
| **MIGHT** | Possibility | John might come to your party. |
| Speculation | Someone might have already told his wife. |
| Suggestion | You might not want to drink this because it’s very bitter. |
| Conditional | If you invite him he might come.  If you had invited him he might have come to your party. |
| **MUST** | Deduction | He failed the exam. He must be disappointed |
| Necessity | To overcome these difficulties we must all work together. |
| Obligation | John must work harder if he wants to pass this exam. (subjective obligation)  All expenses must be approved by the manager. |
| Prohibition | You mustn’t use this computer. (emphatic) |
| Emphatic advice | You must see this film, it’s great. |
| **HAVE TO** | Obligation | You have to stop when the traffic light is red. (imposed obligation) |
| Negative: Not necessary and not done | I don’t have to go to work tomorrow.  I didn’t have to water the flowers yesterday because it rained. |
| **NEED** | Necessity | Do you think I need to take an umbrella? |
| Negative | You needn’t water the flowers as John will be back tomorrow. (not necessary)  I needn’t have watered the flowers because it rained in the afternoon. (done but not necessary) |
| **OUGHT** **TO** | Deduction | He has studied very hard, he ought to pass the exam. |
| Assumption | He ought to have received the parcel by now. |
| Advice | You ought to go to the doctor’s.  You ought not smoke so much. |
| Recommendation | You ought to tell him the truth. |
| **HAD BETTER** | Advice | You had better take those wet clothes off. |
| Recommendation | You had better tell me the truth. |
| **SHOULD** | Assumption / deduction | The plane should be landing now. |
| Advice | You should go to the doctor’s. |
| Recommendation | You should take one of these pills every day. |
| Necessity | You should be wearing a coat, it’s very cold. |
| Obligation | I should be studying but I’m too tired. |
| Prediction | This should be a very good film. |
| Prohibition | You should never repeat what you’ve just said. |
| **SHALL** | Speculation | Where shall/will we be this time next year? |
| Suggestion | Shall we invite John or not? |
| Decision | I shall/will marry John even without your permission. |
| Future | We shall overcome. |
| Question | What shall we do? |
| Offer | Shall we pick you up at 7.00? |
| **WILL** | Assumption | He will have plenty of time to get to the airport. |
| Deduction | He left home an hour ago. He’ll arrive any minute now. |
| Future | He will be 27 next month. |
| Offer | I’ll do the shopping. |
| Promise | I will marry you. |
| Intention | I will wait for you. |
| Obligation / decision | You WILL go to school whether you want to or not. |
| Prediction | It will rain in Rome tomorrow. |
| Conditional | If it rains tomorrow I will/won’t go to the cinema. |
| **WOULD** | Possibility | Would John come with us? |
| Request | Would you please answer the question? |
| Speculation | What would I have done without you? |
| Polite question | Would you, please, close the door? |
| Offer | Would you like a cup of tea? |
| Past tense ‘will’ (indirect speech) | John said he would take me to the cinema. |
| Customary past action | She would take the dog for a walk every morning before going to work. |
| Invitation | Would you like to come with us? |
| Preference | I would rather have a cup of coffee. |
| Conditional | If I were you I would leave.  If I had known you wanted to go to the concert I would have bought you a ticket. |