

# Modal Verbs

- **MODAL VERBS** are used in English to **HELP** other verbs express:

- **Ability**
- **Possibility**
- **Certainty**
- **Advice**
- **Obligation / Necessity**
- **Lack of necessity**
- **Prohibition**

The verbs:

- **CAN**
- **COULD**
- **BE ABLE TO**
- **MAY**
- **MIGHT**
- **MUST**
- **HAVE TO**
- **SHOULD**

are **MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS.**

## \* HOW DO WE USE MODAL VERBS?



Example: *Mary can play* the piano

- \* They do not accept conjugation ([*-s*], [*-ing*], etc.)
- \* They do not need other auxiliary verbs (*don't*, *doesn't*, *isn't*, etc.)

# SOME CHARACTERISTICS

- They do not take an -s / -ing / -ed ending □ *He can cook* (NOT: *He ~~can's~~ cook*).
- They do not use the auxiliary “do” to form questions and negatives □ *They shouldn't make any noise* (NOT: *They ~~don't should~~ make any noise*).
- They are followed by the BASE FORM of the VERB □ *You MUST FASTEN your seat-belt* (NOT: *You ~~MUST TO FASTEN~~ your seat-belt*).
- They do not form ALL TENSES. They usually have PRESENT or PAST tense □ *He CAN play tennis / He COULD play tennis when he was 5 years old.*



# Modal verbs - ability

## CAN

- To talk about ability now or generally

*The doctor **can** see you now.*

*Terry **can** speak Arabic.*

- to talk about decisions made now about future ability

*We **can** go to the concert tomorrow, if you like.*



## • PERMISSION

- CAN = informal
- COULD = polite
- MAY = formal

## • REQUESTS

- CAN YOU...? = informal
- COULD YOU...? = polite
- WILL YOU...? = neutral

# Modal verbs - advice

## SHOULD, OUGHT TO



- To ask for and give advice now, for the future, or generally.

*You **should** / **ought to** eat less fast-food.*