

Modal Verbs

Meaning

Conjugation

Word Order

Meanings of Modal Verbs

Modal verbs have meanings that express mood.

Every modal verb can be combined with any action infinitive to form a modal verb phrase.

A modal verb phrase expresses action and the mood or attitude toward that action.

sollen

können

dürfen

möchten

wollen

müssen

Example: You understand.



Action verb

You should understand.



Modal verb

sollen
should
ought to
to be supposed to

to do: machen

Er macht es.

He does it.

sollen
should
ought to
to be supposed to

Er soll es machen.

He should do it.

können

can

to be able to

to carry: tragen

Er trägt es.

He carries it.

können

can

to be able to

Er kann es tragen.

He can carry it.

dürfen

may

to be allowed to

to be permitted to

to stay: bleiben

Wir bleiben hier.

We stay here.

dürfen

may

to be allowed to

to be permitted to

*Wir dürfen hier
bleiben.*

We may stay here.

möchten

would like to
to have a desire to

to help: helfen

Ihr helft uns.

You help us.

möchten

would like to
to have a desire to

Ihr möchtet uns
helfen.

You would like to help us.

wollen

to want to
to intend to

to become: werden

Du wirst begabt.

You are becoming skilled.

wollen
to want to
to intend to
to plan to

Du willst begabt
werden.
You want to become skilled.

müssen

must

to have to

to be obligated to

to give: geben

Sie geben mehr.

They give more.

müssen

must

to have to

to be obligated to

*Sie müssen mehr
geben.*

They must give more.

sollen

should

ought to

to be supposed to

dürfen

may

to be allowed to

to be permitted to

wollen

to want to

to intend to

können

can

to be able to

müssen

must

to have to

to be obligated to

möchten

would like to

to have a desire to

Conjugation of modal verbs

<i>ich</i>	<i>möcht</i> 	
<i>du</i>	<i>möchtest</i>	<i>-st</i>
<i>er</i>	<i>möcht</i> 	
<i>Wir</i>	<i>möchten</i>	<i>-en</i>
<i>ihr</i>	<i>möchtet</i>	<i>-t</i>
<i>sie</i>	<i>möchten</i>	<i>-en</i>

<i>ich</i>	<i>soll</i>	<i>ich</i>	<i>möchte</i>
<i>du</i>	<i>sollst</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>möchtest</i>
<i>er</i>	<i>soll</i>	<i>er</i>	<i>möchte</i>
<i>wir</i>	<i>sollen</i>	<i>wir</i>	<i>möchten</i>
<i>ihr</i>	<i>sollt</i>	<i>ihr</i>	<i>möchtet</i>
<i>sie</i>	<i>sollen</i>	<i>sie</i>	<i>möchten</i>

Modal verbs “*sollen*” and “*möchten*” have regular conjugations.

ich *will*
du *willst*
er *will*
wir *wollen*
ihr *wollt*
sie *wollen*

*stem-vowel
change
o > i*

Except for “*sollen*” and “*möchten*,” modal verbs have a **stem-vowel change** for the “*ich*,” “*du*” and “*er*” forms.

ich kann

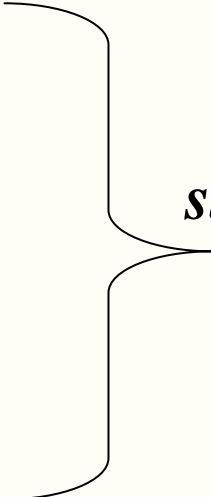
du kannst

er kann

wir können

ihr könnt

sie können



*stem-vowel
change
ö > a*

ich darf

du darfst

er darf

wir dürfen

ihr dürft

sie dürfen

*stem-vowel
change
ü > a*

ich muss

du musst

er muss

wir müssen

ihr müsst

sie müssen

*stem-vowel
change
ü > u*

<i>ich</i>	<i>will</i>	<i>darf</i>	<i>kann</i>	<i>muss</i>	<i>soll</i>	<i>möchte</i>
<i>du</i>	<i>willst</i>	<i>darfst</i>	<i>kannst</i>	<i>musst</i>	<i>sollst</i>	<i>möchtest</i>
<i>er</i>	<i>will</i>	<i>darf</i>	<i>kann</i>	<i>muss</i>	<i>soll</i>	<i>möchte</i>

<i>wir</i>	<i>wollen</i>	<i>dürfen</i>	<i>können</i>	<i>müssen</i>	<i>sollen</i>	<i>möchten</i>
<i>ihr</i>	<i>wollt</i>	<i>dürft</i>	<i>könnt</i>	<i>müsst</i>	<i>sollt</i>	<i>möchtet</i>
<i>sie</i>	<i>wollen</i>	<i>dürfen</i>	<i>können</i>	<i>müssen</i>	<i>sollen</i>	<i>möchten</i>

Word Order

Since the modal verb must be conjugated to agree with the subject, it takes the pivotal *second position* in statement sentences.

The modal remains dependent upon its action verb, which is placed in the *last position* in all sentences, whether statements, questions or imperative commands.

A German sentence only conjugates one verb per clause, therefore, the dependent action verb is given in its *infinitive form*.

“Dependent Infinitive”

