ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Modals MCQ Test With Answers + PDF Exercise 8

English Grammar Tests · 22 questions · Online test and questions PDF: https://englishtestsonline.com/modals-test-8/

1	**D**	2	**B**	3	**B**	4	**C**	5	**B**	6	**C**	7	**D**	8	**C**	9	**D**	10	**A**
11	**C**	12	**C**	13	**D**	14	**D**	15	**E**	16	**E**	17	**B**	18	**D**	19	**D**	20	**C**
21	**D**	22	**D**																

Explanations

1. They are very busy now, but they _____ do this the day after tomorrow, when they are free.
✓ **D) will be able to**
To talk about *__ability in the future, we use__ will be able to__, because__ can __has no future form. The clues are__ the day after tomorrow __and__ when they are free__. Not__ will can*: two modal verbs cannot go together.

2. I _____ write to Ann. I haven't written to her for ages.
✓ **B) must**
Must shows that the speaker personally feels it is necessary: **I haven't written to her for ages**, so I feel I need to write now. Not **had to**, because the sentence is about the present.

3. This work is urgent. It _____ be done at once.
✓ **B) must**
Must expresses *__strong necessity. The work is urgent, so it__ must be done at once__. Not__ ought__: it needs__ to __(__ought to be done*).

4. The teacher said they _____ all go home.
✓ **C) might**
In *__reported speech after__ said__, the teacher's__ may __(permission) usually changes to__ might__:__ "You may all go home" __becomes__ The teacher said they might all go home. **Not** has to__: the subject__ they __needs__ have__, not__ has*.

5. - How _____ I get to the nearest bus stop?

- You _____ go straight and then turn to the left.
✓ **B) can / must**
To ask the way, we say **How can I get...?** (= how is it possible for me to get there). In the reply, **must** tells the listener what is necessary to reach the bus stop: **You must go straight**. Not **must / can**: **How must I get...?** is not natural for asking the way.

6. Oh, you are seriously ill. I think you _____ consult a doctor and if he tells you to stay in bed you _____ do.
✓ **C) should / must**
Should gives *__advice:__ you should consult a doctor__.__ Must __shows strong obligation: if the doctor tells you to stay in bed, it is necessary, so__ you must do __(= you must do it). Not__ have to / couldn't__:__ couldn't* makes no sense here.

7. Tom _____ pass his exam in Literature and now he is working hard as he _____ take it again.
✓ **D) couldn't / has to**
Couldn't describes past failure: Tom didn't pass the exam. **Has to** is present obligation: **now** he needs to take it again. Not **can't / had to**: the exam is in the past and the retake is a present necessity.

8. A: _____ I come in?

B: No, you _____. I am very busy now. I _____ write a report.
✓ **C) May / can't / must**
May I...? politely asks for *__permission.__ No, you can't __refuses it.__ I must write a report __shows the speaker's own obligation. Not__ May / may not / can__:__ I can write a report* does not explain why the speaker is busy.

9. A: _____ I smoke here?

B: No, you _____.
✓ **D) Can / can't**
Can I...? asks for *__permission, and the short answer repeats the modal:__ No, you can't. __Not__ May / don't__: a short answer must repeat the modal verb, not__ do*.

10. You _____ break the body but you _____ break the spirit.
✓ **A) may / can't**
May here means "it is possible" (**you may break the body**). **Can't** means "it is impossible" (**you can't break the spirit**). The two parts contrast with **but**. Not **could / can't**: the saying is about the present, so it doesn't mix past and present.

11. He _____ tell you how glad he is.
✓ **C) can't**
Can't tell you how... is a common expression meaning "he is so glad that words are not enough". It uses the present, like **is**. Not **couldn't**: the past does not match **he is**.

12. He said that I _____ telephone him any time I liked.
✓ **C) might**
In *__reported speech after a past verb (__said__,__ liked__),__ __the permission__ may __changes to__ might__:__ "You may telephone me any time" __becomes__ He said that I might telephone him any time I liked. **Not** can*: it is not backshifted to match the past tense.

13. I have a terrible headache. I _____ do anything.
✓ **D) can't**
Can't means "I am not able to". Because of the headache, I **can't do anything** now.

14. - _____ your son speak English?

- No, but he _____ when he was a schoolboy.
✓ **D) Can / could**
Can asks about *__present ability.__ Could __describes past ability:__ when he was a schoolboy*.

15. Which sentence contains a synonym of the modal verb "**must**"?
✔ **E) He was to go to the south.**
Be to (**was to go**) can express ***obligation or a plan made by others, so it is close in meaning to** must**.** Might**,** may **and** can **express possibility or permission. In** He needs a dictionary**,** need* is a normal verb meaning "want/require something".

16. You _____ easily find the newspaper now where his article was printed.
✔ **E) can**
Can expresses present possibility or ability: it is easy for you to find the newspaper now. The word **now** shows the present, so **couldn't** and **had to** (past forms) don't fit. **Need** doesn't fit the meaning, and **might to** is wrong because modal verbs are not followed by **to**.

17. He said that his father was ill and they _____ go to see the doctor yesterday.
✔ **B) had to**
Had to is the past form of **must/have to**. It shows ***past obligation: because the father was ill, they needed to see the doctor. Not** can **or** may*: they don't fit a past event.

18. Sorry, I _____ go with you. I _____ finish my work.
✔ **D) can't / must**
Can't means "I'm not able to" (I can't go with you now). **Must** gives the reason, a present obligation: **I must finish my work**. Not **couldn't / have to**: this mixes past and present.

19. Last year in April I _____ use my umbrella more often than in May.
✔ **D) had to**
Had to expresses ***past necessity:** last year in April **it rained more, so it was necessary to use the umbrella. Not** must*: it has no past form.

20. "_____ I have another cup of tea?"
✔ **C) May**
May I...? is a polite way to ***ask for permission:** May I have another cup of tea? **Not** Need**:** Need I...?* asks whether something is necessary, not for permission.

21. - I wonder where the chief is.

- He _____ be in his office. I've seen him this morning.
✔ **D) must**
Must expresses a ***logical deduction (I am almost sure). The speaker saw the chief this morning, so** he must be in his office**. Not** can**: we don't use** can* for positive deductions.

22. "I _____ go, Padre, the students will be waiting for me."
✔ **D) must**
Must shows the speaker's own feeling of ***necessity: the students are waiting, so** I must go**. Not** is to**:** is **does not agree with** I*.

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