

MODAL AUXILIARY VERBS

Modal verbs are used to make precise statements and for that reason are very common in scientific and technical texts. Modal verbs have no meaning by themselves. They are always used in conjunction with **main verbs** to help them express ideas (about the past, the present or the future).

Subject + Modal verb + Main verb + Complement

Never add **-s**, **-es**, **-ed**, or **-ing** to the second verb. Modal verbs behave in a different way from ordinary verbs. They don't have **-ing** form, and they don't add **-s** in the third person singular (he, she, it). There are several categories of modal verbs. The most commonly used are:

Ability: can, may.

- You may do this in order to get the best possible performance.
- Civilizations cannot prosper without access to clean drinking water and sanitation services.

Obligation: must, ought to, should.

- Students in that course should attend every lecture.
- Students must enter the examination room quietly and may not bring into it any electronic communication devices. A student needing to speak to the proctor should so indicate by raising his or her hand.
- Assets must always equal the sum of liabilities and shareholders' equity.
- We must find ways to meet water demands with minimum ecological disruption.

Possibility / probability: can, could, may, might, will, would.

- Wastewater may pose a threat to human health or the environment.
- Ongoing shifts in climate would affect the health and welfare of millions of people around the world.
- Higher temperatures might trigger severe flooding in some places and severe drought in others.
- Coastal flooding and storms will raise the toll of deaths, injuries and related diseases.

PASSIVE VOICE

The passive voice is used to describe situations, methods, procedures, processes, etc. It involves the following elements:

Object + Verb to be + Main verb (past participle) + Complement

Tense	Object	To be	Main verb (past participle)
Present	The car/cars	is / are	designed ...
Present perfect	The car/cars	has / have been	designed ...
Past	The car/cars	was / were	designed ...
Past perfect	The car/cars	had been	designed ...
Future	The car/cars	will be	designed ...
Future perfect	The car/cars	will have been	designed ...

Present progressive	The car/cars	is / are being	designed ...
Past progressive	The car/cars	was / were being	designed ...

The passive voice is especially helpful in scientific or technical writing, where the actor is not really important but the process or principle being described is very important. Instead of writing "I prepared a report at period end" it is preferable to write "The report is / was prepared at period end." In technical texts, it is frequent to find modal verbs together with passive voice. In these cases, the passive voice is useful for describing a process in which the details are much more important than anyone's taking responsibility for the action.

- The figure that represents the cost of goods sold during an entire accounting period is computed at the end of the period and it may be concisely stated in the form of a simple equation. The expression "matching costs against revenues" means determining what portion of the cost of goods available for sale should be deducted from the revenue of the current period and what portion must be carried forward (as inventory) to be matched against the revenue of the following period.
- Poverty has declined sharply in countries that have been characterized by massive rural poverty. The trend is particularly pronounced in East, South and Southeast Asia. In China the decline in poverty could be attributed to internal factors such as the expansion of infrastructure.
- Balance sheets are typically presented in two different forms. In the report form, asset accounts must be listed first, with the liability and owners' equity accounts listed in sequential order directly below the assets. In the account form, the balance sheet should be organized in a horizontal manner, with the asset accounts being listed on the left side and the liabilities and owners' equity accounts being listed on the right side.
- Cash equivalents are not cash but can be converted into cash so easily that they are considered equal to cash. Current liabilities are all bills that are due in less than a year (bills that need to be paid in less than a year).
- Coffee cherries must be processed immediately after harvest to prevent spoilage.
- Effective sun-drying can be accomplished by spreading the cherries out on a patio.
- The dried cherries may be run through a machine that crushes the hulls.
- Alternatively, the fruit can be mechanically pulped, washed, and finally dried and liberated from the parchment covering.
- The water content of the coffee cherry might be reduced to up the 10 percent moisture level of a green coffee bean.
- If the added amount is enough to cover all the expenses, the overhead will be covered and the company will be profitable.
- An item was produced at \$100. The manufacturer added \$20 to cover all expenses and expected to make a net profit of \$30. If, however, the item could not be sold at \$150, and it was marked down and sold by \$120, the expenses and cost for the product would have been covered but the firm would have no profit.

Luis A. Saldarriaga B.

English (ESP) teacher

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luisarcelio@yahoo.com