

Modals

can - could

will - would

may - might - must

shall - should

Modals

- used as auxiliary verb (e.g. *I can go*)
- do not show tense or subject agreement (e.g. *He can go* - not *He cans go*)
- before the negative particle in not negation (e.g. *I cannot go*)
- before the subject in yes-no questions (e.g. *Can you go?*)
- take the bare infinitive verb as the main verb in a verb phrase (e.g. *He can go* - not *He can to go* or *He can went*)
- express stance meanings (**see next slides**)

Time Differences with Modals

Modals referring to present and future time:

- can
- may
- shall
- will

Modals that can refer to past time:

- could
- might
- should
- would

* Note that each present/ future modal has a corresponding past modal

Stance meanings of Modals

Permission/ ability:

- can
- could
- may
- might

Meanings

Personal meaning - permission or possibility, ability

Logical meaning - possibility

Stance meanings of Modals

Obligation/ necessity:

- must
- should
- have (got) to
- need to
- be supposed to

Meanings

Personal meaning - obligation

Logical meaning - necessity

Stance meanings of Modals

Volition/ prediction:

- will
- would
- shall

Meanings

Personal meaning - volition or intention

Logical meaning - prediction

Frequency of Modals in Academic Writing

- **can**
- **may**
- **will**
- **would**
- **should**
- **must**
- **could**
- **might**
- **have to**
- **shall**

The most frequent modals in academic writing are *can*, *may*, and *will*.

Would, *should*, *must*, *could*, and *might* are used but infrequently.

The most infrequent modals in academic writing are *have to* and *shall*. *Shall* is extremely infrequent.