

Mastering Modal Verbs with Max the Maths-Monkey

Learning objective: To identify, explain, and use modal verbs to indicate degrees of possibility, obligation, and ability.

Read the short story below about Max's busy day in the forest. Use your knowledge of modal verbs to answer the questions, paying close attention to how these verbs change the certainty of an action.

Max the monkey sat atop the ancient oak tree, staring at a cluster of mysterious, glowing acorns. 'I must solve this pattern before the sun sets,' Max muttered to himself. He knew he could finish the calculation if he stayed focused. 'I might find a secret sequence,' he whispered, 'or perhaps it could be a simple geometric trap.' He picked up his wooden slate. 'I will definitely finish this by dusk,' he declared with confidence. 'I should probably ask Nova for help, but I think I can manage it alone. It may be difficult, but I would love the challenge.'

Word bank: might · could · must · should · will · would · may · can

1. Identify three modal verbs from the passage that express a strong sense of obligation or certainty. Explain the difference in meaning between 'must' and 'should' in this context. (3 marks)

2. Max says, 'I might find a secret sequence.' What does the modal verb 'might' tell the reader about Max's level of certainty regarding his discovery? (2 marks)

3. Rewrite the sentence 'It may be difficult' using a modal verb that makes the difficulty feel more certain. Justify why your chosen verb increases the sense of certainty. (3 marks)

4. Compare and contrast the function of the modal verbs 'can' and 'could' as used in the second sentence of the passage. Why did Max choose 'could' instead of 'can'? (3 marks)

5. What might happen if Max decided to replace 'will' with 'might' in his declaration about finishing the task? Explain how this change alters the reader's perception of Max's character. (3 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene of Max the monkey in his treehouse, surrounded by geometric shapes and charts. Include a speech bubble for Max that uses a modal verb to describe his current scientific investigation.



Extension challenge: Compose a short paragraph of 5-7 sentences describing a future adventure for Max. You must include at least five different modal verbs to express varying degrees of possibility, permission, and necessity. Highlight each modal verb you use.