

Mastering Possibility: A Modal Verb Adventure with Pip

Learning objective: To identify, understand, and apply modal verbs to indicate degrees of possibility, obligation, and ability in formal and informal contexts.

Read each task carefully. Modal verbs (such as might, could, must, and shall) change the tone of your sentences. Use your knowledge of these verbs to refine your writing, keeping your audience and purpose in mind.

Pip the caterpillar is preparing for a grand library expedition. 'I might find a rare dictionary today,' Pip mused. 'I should pack my magnifying glass, and I must remember to bring my favourite bookmark. If the weather holds, I shall visit the oak tree garden first.'

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

1. Identify the two modal verbs in the sentence: 'Max the monkey thought he could solve the puzzle, but he knew he must check his calculations first.' Explain how the meaning of the sentence changes if you replace 'could' with 'will'. (2 marks)

2. Rewrite the following sentence using a modal verb to express a high level of certainty: 'The train is arriving at the station.' (1 mark)

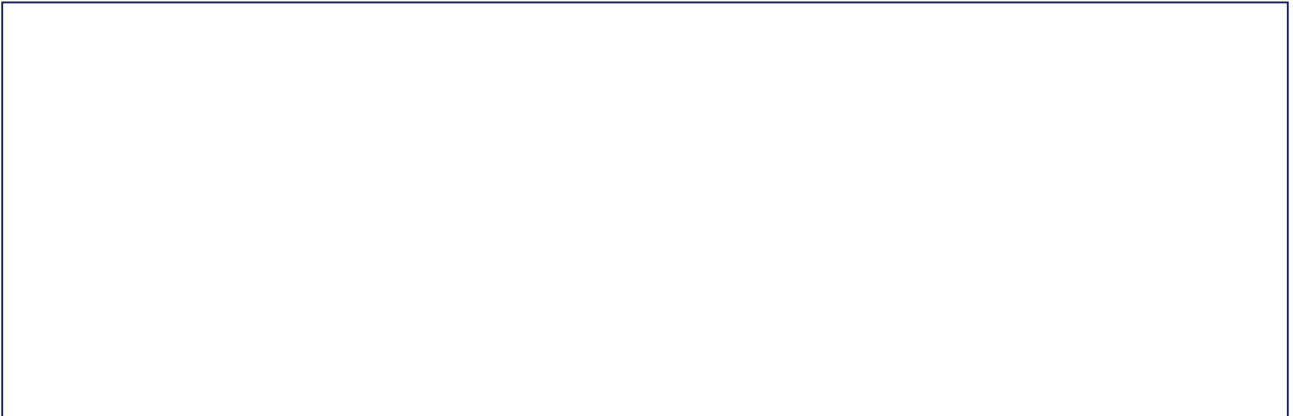
3. Compare and contrast the modal verbs 'might' and 'must'. In what context would a scientist like Nova the owl use 'must' instead of 'might' when recording an experiment? (2 marks)

4. Ellie the elephant needs to write a formal request to the librarian. Using the word 'shall' or 'may', write a polite, formal sentence asking for permission to borrow an ancient map. (2 marks)

5. Justify why a writer would choose to use 'could' instead of 'will' when describing a character's future actions in a suspenseful story. (2 marks)

6. What might happen to the tone of a piece of persuasive writing if you removed all modal verbs? Provide an example of how a command changes when a modal verb is added. (2 marks)

Draw: Draw a scene where Pip the caterpillar is deciding between two different adventures. In your drawing, include two speech bubbles for Pip: one using a modal verb to show possibility ('I might...') and one using a modal verb to show obligation ('I must...').



Extension challenge: Write a short paragraph (5-8 sentences) from the perspective of Kit the fox, who is trying to explain a complex computer code to a friend. Use at least four different modal verbs to express ability, necessity, and possibility. Underline the modal verbs you have used.