Unit 4: Modal verbs and their substitutes
(Ersatzformen)

1. What are modal verbs/ modal auxiliaries?

Words like can / may / must / need and their negative forms can’t / may not / mustn’t / needn’t are modal verbs (modal auxiliaries, modale Hilfsverben). We use them to express an ability (Fähigkeit), permission (Erlaubnis) or obligation (Verpflichtung).

These modal verbs can only be used in the simple present tense. They have no –s in the third person singular and don’t need “to” to form the infinitive.

2. Modal auxiliaries in the past or future (Modalformen und ihre Ersatzformen)

If you want to use modal verbs in the past or future, you have to use their substitutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Simple present</th>
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<th>Will future</th>
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</table>
| **ability, inability**  
(Fähigkeit, Unfähigkeit)  | can / can’t             | could / couldn’t        | ---             |
|                    | am / is / are able to   | was / were able to      | will be able to |
|                    | am not / is not / are not able to | wasn’t / weren’t able to | won’t be able to |
| **permission, forbidding**  
(Erlaubnis, Verbot)         | can / may              | ---                     | ---             |
|                    | can’t / may not / must not | ---                     | ---             |
|                    | am / is / are allowed to | was / were allowed to   | will be allowed to |
|                    | am not / is not / are not allowed to | wasn’t / weren’t allowed to | won’t be allowed to |
| **obligation**  
(Verpflichtung)          | must / needn’t         | ---                     | ---             |
|                    | have to                | had to                  | will have to    |
|                    | doesn’t have to        | didn’t have to          | won’t have to   |
3. Differences between must and have to

I must do my homework now. personal conviction that it is necessary – you think that it is important that you do your homework (inneres Bedürfnis)

I have to do my homework now. orders of a third person: your parents told you to do your homework (äußerer Zwang)

Be careful:

she mustn’t = she is not allowed to (nicht dürfen)!

She mustn’t play with her friends today because she has to learn maths. (Her parents told her that she has to stay home and learn maths!)

she needn’t = she doesn’t have to (nicht müssen / brauchen)

She needn’t learn maths today because she did it yesterday.

= She doesn’t have to learn maths today.

Exercises: 1. Must, mustn’t or needn’t? Fill in the right words.

Sarah: We ________________ leave for the train station yet. It's only seven o'clock.

Kim: Yes, but we ________________ forget the tickets.

Sarah: You ________________ worry, I've already got them in my bag. My bag is very big, so you ________________ bring one yourself.

Kim: Thank you, that's great. I'm happy that I ________________ carry too much luggage (= Gepäck).

Sarah: You are welcome. But don't worry, we ________________ walk far because we can take the bus from the train station to the hotel.

Kim: That's fine, but we ________________ forget the bag on the bus! Do you have a map? We ________________ go the wrong way!

Sarah: Stop worrying all the time. Let's think about what we can do in London. We ________________ visit the Tower, it's world famous. But we ________________ go to the Dungeon because I've been to the one in Hamburg.

Kim: Look! Hurry! It's 7:30. We ________________ be late.
Exercise 2: Use substitute forms to change the following sentences.

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<td>We can do what we want.</td>
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<td>He can speak French.</td>
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<td>May I go home now?</td>
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<td>You needn't bring a present.</td>
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<td>Can I help you?</td>
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TEST your language skills on modals: What was Sarah's mum allowed to do when she was a child?

Test 6
What is missing in these sentences? Put in the right substitute of the modal if you use the simple past.

Sarah: _______________ I go and see the new Mad Max film?
Mum: No, you ________________. You're too young.
Sarah: Oh, but that isn't fair. I _______________ do anything.
Mum: You're lucky. When I was your age, I (mustn't) _______________ go out in the evening at all.
Mum: And I (must) _______________ work every day after school.
Sarah: But you said you enjoyed it. You helped grandpa on the farm. And you (may) _______________ ride the horses.
Mum: Yes, that was nice. Your grandpa taught me to ride horses almost as soon as I (can) _______________ walk. Mum: But I (must) _______________ clean out the stables and look after the horses. It was a lot of work.
Sarah: Yes, but you (needn't) _______________ do homework for two hours every evening.
Mum: That's true. We didn't have as much homework but our subjects weren't as interesting. We didn't learn any languages so I (cannot) _______________ speak German until I went to college and I've never learnt French.
Sarah: But you're lucky. German is so difficult. And you (needn't) _______________ do Technology.
Mum: You mean we (cannot) _______________ do Technology. We all wanted to learn about computers but the school didn't have any because they were very expensive.
Sarah: Did they have electricity when you were young then?
Mum: Ha ha very funny. We always (must) _______________ be nice to our parents.
Sarah: Well, did you always listen to your parents then?
Mum: Of course, I did.
Grandpa (walking into the room): No, she did not. Your mother (cannot) _______________ understand the word 'no'.
Mum: Ah yes, but that wasn't fair. My brothers (may) _______________ do everything.
Sarah: Yes, Mum. That's what I said. It just isn't fair, is it?
Exercises: 1. Must, mustn't or needn't? Fill in the right words.

Sarah: We **needn't** leave for the train station yet. It's only seven o' clock.

Kim: Yes, but we **mustn't** forget the tickets.

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