

Adapted from: Elementary Language Practice by Michael Vince

Explanations

- Modals do not have third person -s endings.

I can swim. Helen can swim.

- Modals have more than one meaning. This depends on the context.

You must pay before 21st January. (Obligation)

I think Carol must be very happy. (Certainty)

Can you use a computer? (Ability)

Can you open the window? (Informal request)

Nick can't dance. He's never (Inability- not able to do it)

learned. It can't be Tuesday! (Impossibility)

- Some **modals** have the same meanings in the same context.

I have to go = I must go.

The negative forms have different meanings.

I don't have to go. (It's not necessary.)

I mustn't go. (It's not allowed.)

- Some **modals** have only small differences of meaning.

I have to wear a suit and tie. (This is the rule.)

*I should wear a suit and tie. (This is not a rule but people expect me
to do it. I can choose not to do it!)*

Alan has to study for his exam, but he can't concentrate.