MODALITY and MODAL VERBS

Modality is a **meaning** category: it expresses the speaker's attitude to a proposition or it's aimed at controlling people's actions and events.   ⊙   Look carefully at the following sentences.
What is the major systematic difference between the **(a)** sentences and **(b)** sentences?

1. a) You must be very careful.
    b) You must be very careless.

2. a) He can only come with us if he behaves himself.
    b) He can only be French with that accent.

3. a) Students may borrow books from the library.
    b) Students may steal books from the library.

4. a) He must have passed the examination before we will admit him.
    b) He must have passed the examination by now, surely.

5. a) She needn't work at the exercise any longer.
    b) She needn't necessarily be working at the exercise.

6. a) It's possible for John to borrow the car.
    b) It's possible that John borrows the car.

7. a) I expect you to cut the grass.
    b) I expect you cut the grass.

8. a) She's supposed to be visiting her grandmother.
    b) She's supposed to be very arrogant.

9. a) You may not stay here.
    b) You may not like the film.

⊙ While you're trying to answer the question above, decide which (**a**) or (**b**) fits with the following explanations:

    (   )   have to do with commands, obligations, prohibition, exemption;
    (   )   have to do with conclusions, deductions, possibility;
    (   )   have to do with evidence, facts, ideas;
    (   )   have to do with actions and deeds;
    (   )   have to do with events, processes in time;
    (   )   have to do with propositions, outside space and time.

⊙ Consider the sentences below. Some have two possible interpretations and some only one. For those which allow two interpretations explain the difference in meaning.

A)   They must have arrived in Edinburgh by now.

B)   She must work harder than the other secretaries.

C)   You may not come here again.

D)   You may have seen her when she visited Edinburgh.

E)   You needn't read the book if you don't want to.

F)   You might have told me.

TWO KINDS OF MODALITY

Many modal auxiliaries are ambiguous between two kinds of modality.

(i)	Deoentic modality.	(ii)	Epistemic modality

(i) <u>Deontic modality</u>   - Speaker trying to exert control over future events; deals with **acts/actions**.
    - trying to control behaviour. The **directive** function of language; necessary / possible / advisable for action X to happen in future.

(ii) <u>Epistemic modality</u>   - Speaker assessing truth of propositions; making guesses about **propositions** (s)he is not certain of.
    Modals express speaker's estimation of truth of propositions as certain / likely / possible / doubtful

    -deals with (potential) facts. The **verdictive** function of language.

I. Deontic Modality

Speaker attempting to control future acts/behaviour; eg: permitting, refusing to permit, exempting, forbidding ...
-can be understood in the terms of underlying concepts of <u>necessity</u> and <u>possibility</u> which stand in a relationship of <u>inverseness</u> to each other.

	NECESSITY				POSSIBILITY	
	Necessity	/	Act		Possibility	/	Act
1.	It is nec		do X	=	It is not poss		not do X
	+	.	+		-		-
2.	It is nec		not do X	=	It is not poss		do X
	+		-		-		+
3.	It is not nec		do X	=	It is poss		not do X.
	-		+		+		-
4.	It is not nec		not do X	=	It is poss		do X
	-		-		+		+

If we take these <u>underlying</u> meanings of <u>necessity</u> and <u>possibility</u> (that speakers might wish to express) and map them on to actual modal auxiliary verbs, we derive the following table (of <u>surface forms</u>).

Modals used: must & can

		Necessity / Act			Possibility /	Act
1.	Obligation	You must	leave	=	You can't	not leave
		+	+		-	-
2.	Prohibition	You must	not leave	=	You can't	leave
		+	- (stay)		-	+
3.	Exemption	You need not	leave	=	You can	not leave
		-	+		+	- (stay)
4.	Permission	You need not	not leave	=	You can	leave
		-	-		+	+

These are not the only surface forms available for these distinctions of meaning.

eg. : "You can leave."	. . .	You're free to leave.
		You may leave.
		You're allowed to leave.
		It's OK for you to leave.
		There's no need for you to stay

II.   Epistemic Modality

Speaker making an assessment - estimating the truth of a proposition. Assessment of potential facts.
-    Meanings expressed in epistemic modality may again be understood in terms of concepts of necessity and possibility which stand in relationship of inverseness to each other.

	NECESSITY /	PROPOSITION		POSSIBILITY /	PROPOSITION
1.	It is necessary	that X	=	It is not possible	that not X
	+	+		-	-
2.	It is nec.	that not X	=	It is not poss.	that X
	+	-		-	+
3.	It is not nec.	that X	=	It is poss.	that not X
	-	+		+	-
4.	It is not nec.	that not X	=	It is poss.	that X
	-	-		+	+

Again we can take these underlying meanings of necessity and possibility and map them on to actual modal auxiliaries, deriving a table of surface forms.
Complete this table using "must",   can and "be Scottish". Beware! You will need two more modal forms besides these two.

		NECESSITY	/	Proposition			POSSIBILITY	/	Proposition	
1.	He	must		be Scottish	=	He	can't		not be Scottish	[*]
		+		+			-		-	
2.	He				=	He				
		+		-			-		+	
3.	He				=	He				
		-		+			+		-	
4.	He				=	He				
		-		-			+		+	

[*]Double negative can be realised by only.
  Eg.:   "He can't not be Scottish."   = He can only be Scottish.

Remember epistemic modality can be expressed in ways other that through the use of modal auxiliaries.

Eg.: "He must be Scottish." ...	He's sure to be Scottish.
	He's certain to be Scottish.
	He's bound to be Scottish.
	He's most likely to be'Scottish.
	There is no doubt he is Scottish.
	He's definitely Scottish.

III.   **Epistemic and Deontic Modality:**   Additional Points

(i)   **The** distribution of Auxiliaries in <u>Epistemic</u> table is slightly different from the distribution in <u>Deontic</u> table.

Notice right-hand side of <u>Deontic</u> table, you can switch from "can" to <u>may</u>

You cannot stay	=	You may not stay.
You cannot leave	=	You may not leave.
You can stay	=	You may stay.
You can leave	=	You may leave.

whereas in <u>Epistemic</u> modality you can't choose freely between <u>may</u> and "<u>can</u>

He can only be Scottish	~	*He may only be Scottish. . (?)
He can't be Scottish		?
He may not be Scottish		?
He may be Scottish		?

(ii)   - DEONTIC MODALITY: time involved is mainly the future;

         - EPISTEMIC MODALITY: is generally the present but can be past; can involve future with "<u>may</u>"

(iii)   Many learners' difficulties stem from modal auxiliaries interaction with negation: **the scope of negation;**

      a)   Internal negation (= main verb negation):   ↗negation applies to propositional component.

      b)   External negation (= auxiliary verb negation) ↖negation applies to modality component.

Eg. :   "She **may** ↖**not** have known him."   /   "She may **not**↗ have **known** him."

         a)   "It is possible that she did not know him." - (Int.)↗

         b)   "It is <u>not</u> possible that she knew him."   - ↖ (Ext.)

<u>Deontic</u>:   NECESSITY:

a)	It is necessary **not go**	-	You must**n't go**	=	Prohibiting.
b)	It is **not necessary** to go	-	You **needn't** go	=	Exempting.

                    POSSIBILITY:

a)	You may **not go**	=	permitting	(Int.)
b)	You **may not** go	**=**	refusing to permit	(Ext.)

⊙ Look below. What's the scope of negation in the following cases?   **(a) or (b)?**

       1.   You can**not** get in.

       2.   You must**n't** keep them waiting.

       3.   You should**n't** say anything.

       4.   You need**n't** say anything if you don't want to.

       5.   You may **not** use a dictionary.

       6.   You might **not** enjoy the book.- ~