

Primary and modal auxiliary verbs (not all possible functions or aspects are listed)

Primary auxiliary verbs		
Verb	Grammatical function	Examples
be	Progressive aspect	<i>John is playing tennis in the garden</i>
	Continuous aspect	<i>She's staying at The Grand Hotel</i>
	Iterative aspect	<i>Someone is knocking</i>
	Passive voice dynamic	<i>The window was broken during the game</i>
	Passive voice stative	<i>The car was repaired on time</i>
do	Question forms	<i>Does he like the music?</i>
	Negative forms	<i>They didn't go out</i>
	Negative imperatives	<i>Don't touch!</i>
	Emphatic forms	<i>We do enjoy her company</i> <i>Do have some more</i>
have	Perfect aspect	<i>She has / had / will have arrived</i>
	Causative	<i>I had the house painted</i>
get	Passive voice dynamic	<i>The house got damaged</i>
	Causative	<i>I got John to do the work</i>
will / shall / would	Futurity	<i>She will be here tomorrow</i> <i>I shall be 26 next week</i> <i>He would soon discover the truth</i>

Modal auxiliary verbs		
Verb	Function	Example
be able to	Dynamic modality	<i>He was able to come</i>
can	Dynamic modality	<i>I can help</i>
	Deontic modality	<i>Can I go now, please?</i>
	Epistemic modality	<i>It can be cold in the winter</i>
	Alethic modality (negative)	<i>Parallel lines can't meet</i>
could	Dynamic modality	<i>I could play the piano when I was 10</i>
	Deontic modality	<i>Could you come early, please?</i>
	Epistemic modality	<i>That could be a problem</i>
dare	Deontic / dynamic modality	<i>I daren't ask any more questions</i>
had better	Deontic modality	<i>I had better go soon</i>
have to	Deontic modality	<i>You have to see the boss</i>
	Epistemic modality	<i>This has to be the right train</i>
may	Deontic modality	<i>May I ask a question?</i>
	Epistemic modality	<i>That may be helpful</i>
might	Deontic modality	<i>Might I suggest a better idea?</i>
	Epistemic modality	<i>That might be the postman at the door</i>
must	Deontic modality	<i>You must not be late</i>
	Epistemic modality	<i>That must be his sister</i>
	Alethic modality	<i>Two plus two must make four</i>
need	Deontic modality	<i>You need to apply again</i>
	Alethic modality	<i>A rectangle needs to have four sides</i>
ought	Deontic modality	<i>You ought to try again</i>
	Epistemic modality	<i>She ought to be there if the train's on time</i>
shall	Deontic modality (negative)	<i>She shall not have the money from me</i>
	Deontic-commissive modality	<i>I shall pay you tomorrow without fail</i>
should	Deontic modality	<i>We should complain, I think</i>
	Epistemic modality	<i>That should be the right answer</i>
used	* Habitual aspect (past)	<i>They used to live over there</i>
will	Deontic modality	<i>You won't tell her, will you?</i>
	Deontic-commissive modality	<i>I will get the work done on time</i>
	* Habitual aspect (present)	<i>He will be so difficult</i>
	Epistemic modality	<i>That will be her mother that you saw</i>
would	Epistemic modality	<i>That would be the manager that you spoke to</i>
	Dynamic modality	<i>I would be happy to help</i>
	Deontic modality	<i>Would you please be quiet?</i>
	* Habitual aspect (past)	<i>She would always take her holiday in Margate</i>

* These forms may be considered primary auxiliary verbs as they signal aspect rather than modality *per se*.