

Socializing in English

by Sara Helm

Aim: To practise and review modal verbs and their functions in a social context.

Sub aim: To review social English phrases in general.

Level: Elementary - advanced

Age: Teenagers and adults

Preparation: These activities assume some previous presentation of modal verbs, their use, grammatical structure and functions.

Make a copy of one or more of the modal wheel worksheets for your one-to-one student, student pairs or small groups. Make a copy of the modal functions worksheet for each student.

Warm-up for Activity 1

Ask students to brainstorm a few social scenarios they would find it most useful to learn language for.

Examples: Visiting a restaurant, entertaining a foreign guest.

Collect their ideas and write them all up at the top of the board for other students to select from.

Draw one modal verb wheel on the board with each of the nine main modals randomly distributed around it. Select one social scenario from the list provided by your students and demonstrate how to use it, eliciting a dialogue from the class. Start with the modal at the top of the wheel. Elicit a starting sentence from the class, containing this modal. Continue round the wheel, eliciting sentences from the class, until a short dialogue has been built, using each modal. How much correction you provide at each stage is your choice. You could leave possibly incorrect sentences on the board and then correct at the end of this part of the exercise, but this could have the disadvantage of resulting in a disjointed dialogue once corrected. I prefer to encourage the class to self-correct as we go along (providing my own input where necessary) so that correct samples of social English are presented as each modal is tackled.

If the class is enjoying the exercise, you can go round the modal wheel a second or even third time

in different colours, to build up a longer dialogue, especially if you have a large class. With a one-to-one student you can provide every second sentence to make the exercise more interactive and direct the dialogue down a useful route.

Activity 1

Distribute the modal wheel worksheets (Worksheets 1A-1C). You might give different worksheets to different pairs or groups for variety. With a one-to-one student you might give this as a homework exercise or work through the exercise with them as before. Let each pair or group choose their favourite social scenario from the board list and work around their modals, producing sentences for each one to build up a dialogue. See the example of a completed modal verb wheel.

At this point you might choose to circulate, providing help and correction where necessary. Alternatively, you might ask each group to act out their dialogues, providing a class correction stage here. Recording each dialogue for review, either with a tape recorder or a camcorder, could be fun. However you choose to review and correct the dialogues, your students should proceed to the second challenge with accurate dialogues.

Variation on Activity 1: Guess the dialogue

Review and correct the completed modal wheels out of class. If necessary, allow pairs or groups time to rewrite. In the next lesson, ask the pairs or groups to read out the first two sentences. They should then go round the wheel eliciting possible answers to the remaining sentences from each group. The group with the sentence closest to the one written by the wheel's authors is awarded a point.

Follow-up activities

Do a class review of each wheel produced. This could include, exploring the relationship between the speakers, the formality of the situation and therefore the register used, such as May I help you, sir? versus Can I help you, dear. You could elicit alternative ways of expressing each sentence if the context were different.

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Ask groups to swap completed and correct modal wheels. Instruct groups to use the first two sentences and rewrite the dialogue following the same modal pattern, but taking the dialogue in a completely new direction. These can be acted out or recorded and reviewed in class as before.

Ask groups to write their sentences up on the board randomly. Get the rest of the class to reconstruct their dialogue.

As pairs or groups act out their dialogues, note down useful social English vocabulary items they have used or could use, such as *loo* versus *toilet*, for example and do a vocabulary extension exercise with the class. Review and correct the completed modal wheels out of class.

Warm-up for Activity 2

Give each student a copy of Worksheet 2. Review the presented modal functions with the class. Go back to the board modal wheel and elicit the correct function for each modal sentence in its particular context from the class.

Activity 2

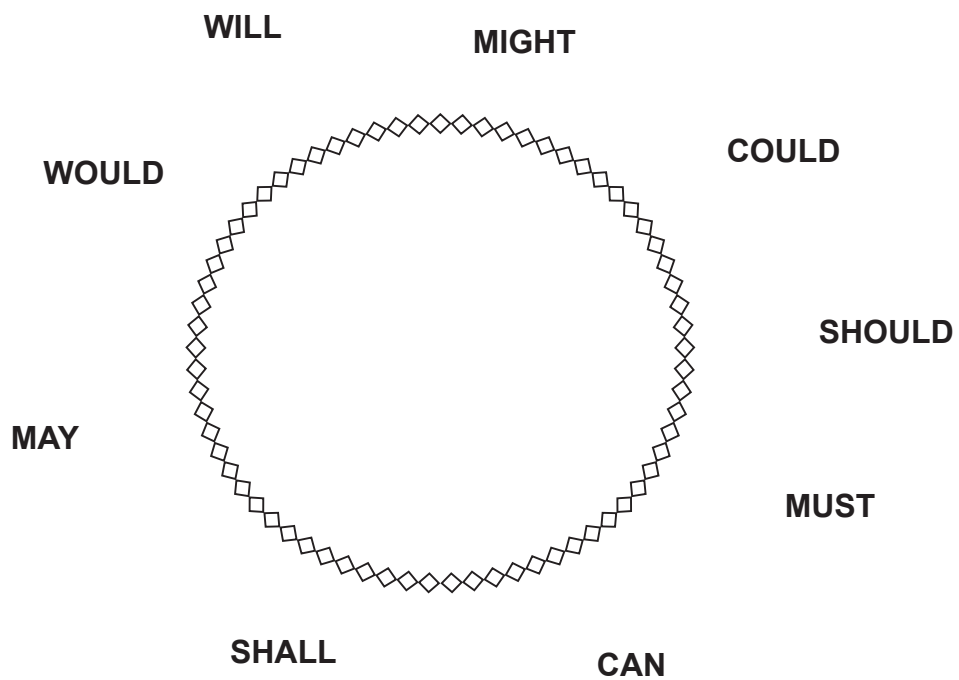
Ask your students to look at each modal sentence on their wheel and select the correct function of the modal contained in it in its particular context. They should write this in the box next to the relevant modal verb. You might ask groups to swap dialogues before doing this, for added interest. Groups can re-enact each dialogue, stating which function each modal verb performs, in a class review. Alternatively, this could be given as a homework activity.

The more of these wheels the student does, the more they will become aware of how many modal verbs can perform one particular function and how many functions can be served by certain modals, depending on context.

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Activity 1

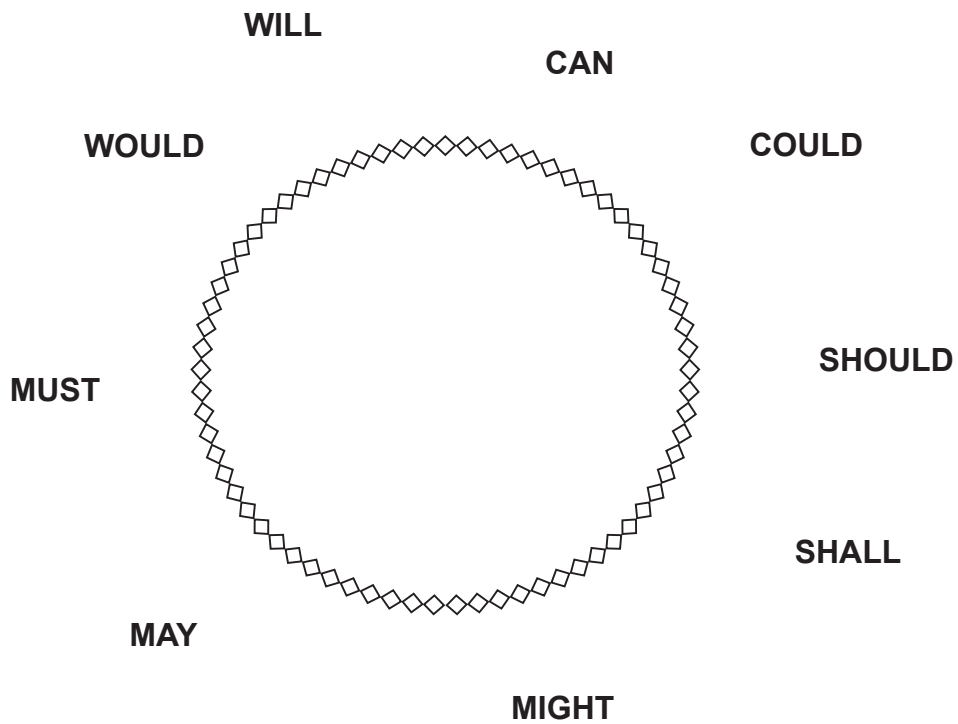
Modal verb wheel 1



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Activity 1

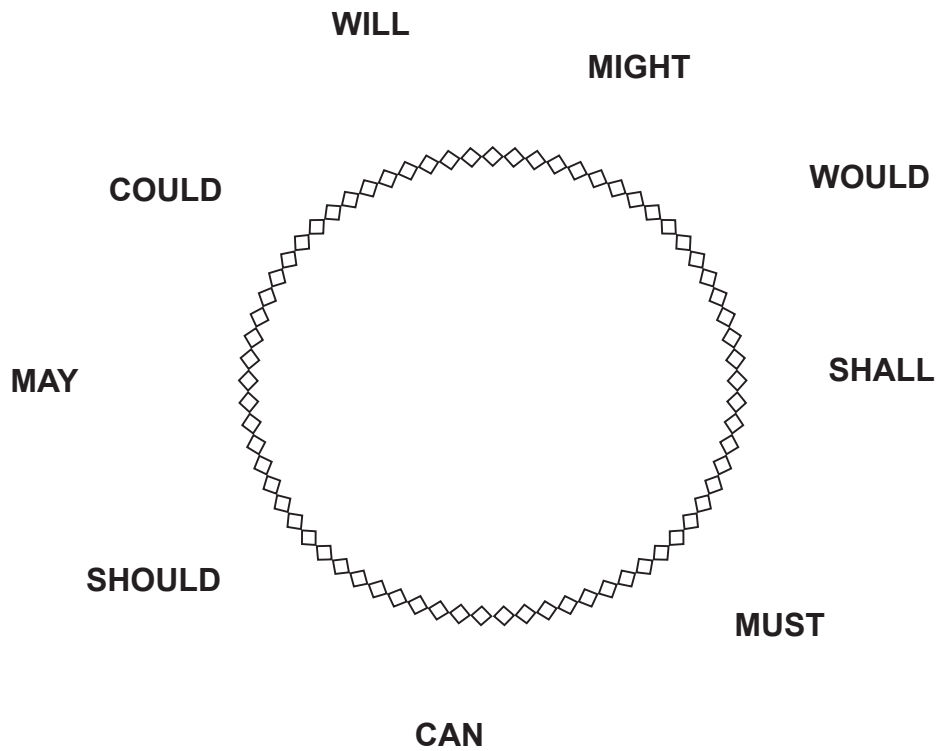
Modal verb wheel 2



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Activity 1

Modal verb wheel 3



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Activity 2**Modal Functions**

MODAL VERB	FUNCTION	SENTENCE
CAN		
COULD		
MAY		
MIGHT		
MUST		
SHALL		
SHOULD		
WILL		
WOULD		

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Example

Activity 1: A completed modal verb wheel for socializing in English.

Context: Two people who know each other well, eating together.

Register: Informal.

I'll **(WILL)** make us one if you like.

CAN we have some biscuits with it too?

WOULD you like a coffee?

COULD you pass the salt please?

You **SHOULD**n't put so much salt on your food!

SHALL I get us some more water?

That **MIGHT** be a good idea, thanks.

That was delicious,
We **MUST** try to be careful about our diet.

Yes, we **MAY** need it!