

Week 12

Supplementary material

English for migrant activists

Modals (1): be able to, can, could, may, might

What Are Modals?

Modals are helping verbs that show ability, possibility, permission, or necessity. In this lesson, we will focus on "be able to," "can," "could," "may," and "might."

Uses and Examples

- **Ability:**
 - *Migrants can learn new languages quickly.*
 - *She is able to speak three languages.*
- **Possibility:**
 - *Migrants might face challenges when applying for jobs.*
 - *The government may change the immigration law next year.*
- **Permission:**
 - *Can I apply for asylum here?*
 - *May I speak to the immigration officer?*
- **Past Ability:**
 - *He could find work easily before the law changed.*
 - *They were able to support their families before losing their jobs.*

Forming Sentences with Modals

- **Positive:** Subject + modal + base verb (*She can work in an office.*)
- **Negative:** Subject + modal + not + base verb (*He cannot travel without a visa.*)
- **Question:** Modal + subject + base verb? (*May I ask a question?*)

Examples Related to Migrant Issues

1. *Migrants can receive free legal assistance from some organizations.*
2. *If you work hard, you will be able to build a better future.*
3. *Some workers may face discrimination in their workplace.*
4. *Could you explain the asylum process to me?*
5. *Before the policy change, undocumented migrants could access healthcare.*
6. *If we organize a campaign, we might raise awareness about migrant rights.*
7. *May I request an interpreter for the interview?*

Tip:

- Use **“can”** for general ability and permission.
- Use **“be able to”** for specific achievements.
- Use **“may”** and **“might”** to discuss uncertain situations.
- Use **“could”** for past ability and polite requests.

Practice Exercises

A. Fill in the blanks with the correct modal

1. ____ I speak to a lawyer about my rights? (permission)
2. Some migrants ____ (not) find work because of their immigration status. (ability)
3. If the law changes, more migrants ____ receive protection. (possibility)
4. Before the crisis, he ____ send money home every month. (past ability)
5. We ____ need to protest if the government removes labor protections. (possibility)

B. Rewrite the sentences in negative form

1. Migrants can get free healthcare. → _____

2. She may apply for asylum next year. → _____
3. They could work without restrictions before. → _____
4. He is able to travel without a visa. → _____
5. The organization might support undocumented workers. →

C. Discussion Questions

- What rights should all migrants be able to access?
- How can governments ensure that migrants can live and work safely?
- What might change in the future to improve migrant conditions?