



You may give verbs a helping hand, if you can

CAPS Statement

Language Structures & Conventions

Working with words and sentences:

- Builds on use of modals, e.g. '**can**' to show ability, '**may**' to ask for permission

Note

Some verbs help to explain certain things. These are called modal verbs.

Examples are: *can/could, may/might, must, will/would, shall/should* (and their opposites).

Let us look at **can**, **may** and **must**.

We use the verb **can** to show *ability*:

- I *can* sew on a button. (means: I have the ability, knowledge and skill to sew on a button)
- He *can* bake delicious cakes. (means: he has the ability, knowledge and skill to bake)

We use the verb **may** to:

- *give permission* (You *may* go home early).
- *ask for permission* (Please *may* I have an ice-cream?)
- *show possibility* (Ross *may* come and play, if it is not raining.)

We use the word **must**:

- to show an instruction or rule that *has to be obeyed*.
- For example In South Africa, we *must* drive on the left-hand side of the road.

Activity 1

What can you do? Answer these questions about yourself. Do you have the ability?

Example

Can you swim? Yes, I *can* swim OR No, I *cannot* swim.

- ① Can you add $2 + 2$? _____
- ② Can you speak Russian? _____
- ③ Can you play cards? _____



- ④ Can you ride a bike? _____
- ⑤ Can you cook? _____
- ⑥ Can you lift 1000 kgs with one hand? _____

Activity 2

Do this activity with your desk partner. Take turns to be the learner and the teacher.

Example

Learner 1: **May** I eat my lunch in the classroom?

Learner 2 (teacher): Yes, you **may**, because it is raining outside.

Learner 1: May I?

Learner 2 (teacher): Yes you may OR No, you may not.

- ① _____ sit down?
- ② _____ smoke?
- ③ _____ go to the toilet?
- ④ _____ come in?
- ⑤ _____ use my cellphone in class?
- ⑥ _____ ask you a question?

Teacher Tip

Remind learners:

- modal verbs cannot be used in past or future tense
- add 'not' to make a modal verb negative: may not, can not (can't), must not (mustn't)

While learners are doing the oral activity (partner pairs), walk around the room observing, asking and answering questions, giving clarification and assistance.

