

The Economy: Modal Verbs in the Future

The odds are, you know how to use modal verbs to describe what's possible and what's a good idea. (I hope you can—we [talked about it just last week!](#)) And that is how we use modal verbs most often. But there's another way we use modal verbs: to talk about the future.

This week is a good time to talk about the future meaning of modal verbs, because talking about the economy often turns into talking about the future. Today, I'm going to help you describe what's possible in the future, as well as what's probable and what's expected.

Before You Listen to the Recording

You might want to review the last [grammar lesson we had on the modal verbs](#) before we start. Can you use 'can,' 'may,' 'should,' 'ought to,' or 'must' in a sentence? Those are the words we're going to be learning, but we'll be learning *second* meanings for all of them, so make sure you know the first meaning, already!

Something else you'll want is to know the meanings of the words 'possible,' 'probable,' and 'expected.' If you know them, you're ready to go. If you don't, here are some fast definitions:

'Possible' means that a thing *can* happen. Not that it will, and not that it's a good idea, it just means it can happen. It's *possible* for me to give you all my money. But it won't happen.

'Probable' means that the chance of a thing happening is more than 50%. If I roll two dice, it's probably that they won't both be sixes.

And the last word, *expected*, means that I think something will happen. If I turn the light switch, it's expected that the lights will come on. It's *possible* that I have no electricity, or the lights are broken, so 'expected' doesn't mean something *will* happen. Only what I think will happen.

Start the recording now.

After You've Listened to the Recording

Okay. I hope I explained everything well. Is it all clear?

Do you think often about the future? Are you worried about what can happen? What do you think may happen? What do you think should happen?

Do you think about the economy much? What do you think the governments of the world should do? What ought to happen if the governments do what they should? (That's a pretty tricky question!) How would you use these words in a sentence?