

Hometown English: Modal Verbs

Today we're going to talk about a bit of grammar that will be useful when you tell people about the possibilities in your hometown. But, the modal verbs—today's grammar—are something you can use when you talk about *any* topic.

Before You Listen to the Recording

It's possible that you think you know the modal verbs—and it's possible that you *do* know them—but many of my students have trouble with 'have to' and 'must.' They're surprised when I tell them that the way they use them—the way they're used in German— isn't the way we use them in English. So, when you listen to the recording, it's important to pay attention to *what an English speaker understands* when he hears one of these words. *Don't* just think about how the word is normally translated into your own language.

If you like to take notes while you listen, here are the **Number** modal verbs we're going to be talking about today:

- Can
- May
- Should
- Have to
- Must

After You've Heard the Recording

First, did everything you heard about the modal verbs match what you thought you knew? Were you surprised? Many of my students are surprised that we almost never say 'must' in American English. The German equivalent—that is, the word that is translated from 'must' in German—is used much more often.

Can you use each of these words in talking about your hometown? What is it possible to do there? What is possible that I might want to do there? What do you think are good ideas? Or bad ideas? Is there anything in your hometown that a tourist 'has to' visit?

Let us know! I'm ready to hear about it!