CHAPTER 9

The modals and the conditionals

Modals have two particular grammatical properties. They lack the inflectional -s suffix in the present tense of the third person singular (for example, after he, she, and it in the simple present tense) and they lack the to on a following infinitive form (see the examples below).

Sue can run well. (modal + verb)

but not, as the asterisk indicates, the following sentences do not occur.

Sue *cans run well. (no third person singular -s)
Sue can *to run well. (no to before the following verb)

The modals and tense

Although the modals are traditionally classified as past or present, their actual meanings have more to do with considerations other than time. One distinction coded by this division is that between what is here termed the ‘anticipated’ (the present tense forms) and the ‘hypothetical’ (the past tense forms), discussed in further detail in the section on conditionals.

The nine modal verbs are listed below with their traditional tense classifications. Since this division does not correspond in any obvious way to past and present time, which is present and which is past must simply be memorized.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>present tense</th>
<th>past tense</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>must</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shall</td>
<td>should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will¹</td>
<td>would</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This classification of the modals as present and past is traditional, so it is necessary to know it, but in the language classroom, labelling the modals as present and past is far more confusing than helpful and thus is best avoided.

Would, for example, is traditionally treated as the past tense of will, but the use of would is not restricted to referring to past events. Quite the contrary. Would can be used to refer to past, present, or future events.

When he was young, he would...

Would you come here? present time
Would you help me tomorrow? future time

The tense labels tell us little about the meanings or the actual uses of the modals. Certainly, the pairing does make sense with reference to the switch from direct to indirect speech, that is, from a direct quote to a more indirect report. Compare the examples below:

1. a. Shirley said, “I will do it tomorrow.”
   b. Shirley said that she would do it tomorrow.

2. a. Karen asked, “Can we leave?”
   b. Karen asked if we could leave.

3. a. Jerry said, “Bill may not pass my course.”
   b. Jerry said that Bill might not pass his course.

However, in terms of other meanings and other uses, the form of a modal does not necessarily indicate the time reference of the sentence in which it is used; the so-called past forms of modals (for example, could) often express essentially the same meaning as the so-called present tense form (for example, can).

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1. Will, although present ‘tense’, certainly often deals with future time. Ways of indicating he future are discussed in detail in the chapter on tense uses.
Chapter 8: Some tense-aspect labelling exercises.

Some tense-aspect labelling exercises.

**EXERCISE 8.1: TENSE-ASPECT LABELS FOR MODALS.**

Write the tense-aspect labels for the verbs in the following sentences. Note: The tense label and the time do not always agree. The answers to this exercise are found after Exercise 2.

Example:  *Could* he *have solved* the problem?  past perfect tense

1. *Would* you *like* to visit Torun?

2. You *must be kidding!*

3. Tim *must have made* a mistake.

4. *Could* you *get* the door?

5. *Should n't* you *have been working?*

6. *Could* he *have taken care of* it?

7. *May* I *have* a light?

8. Sharon *could* n’t *have broken* this.

9. *Might* you *have been tricked?*

10. Who *will be teaching* that class?
EXERCISE 8.2: TENSE-ASPECT LABELS FOR MODALS.

Give the tense-aspect labels for the verbs in the following sentences.

1.  *Could* you *understand* the textbook? ________________________
2.  Dorothy *might have finished* already. ________________________
3.  Elizabeth *will be* here in the fall. ________________________
4.  Dave *can edit* with the best of them. ________________________
5.  *Shall* we *be leaving*? ________________________
6.  *Must* you always *be* so negative? ________________________
7.  *Might* you *be* a little more positive? ________________________
8.  *Should* Sharon *be working* there? ________________________
9.  Good food *will* always *please* me. ________________________
10. *Could* she *break* the record next week? ________________________

EXERCISE 8.3: MIXED TENSE-ASPECT LABELS.

Provide the tense-aspect labels for the verbs in the following passage. The answers to this exercise are found after Exercise 4.

Part I.

Early in May (1) *came* a day of steady rain. Enveloped in a rain-cloak and sheltered under her lowered umbrella she (2) *ventured* down the hill towards the shops. Near the railway
arch the overshadowed street began to be crowded with jostling figures. People (3) were pouring from the city trams at the terminus and coming out of the station entrance in a steady stream. Hard intent faces, clashing umbrellas, the hard snarling monotone of the North London voice, gave her the feeling of being an intruder. Everything seemed to wonder what she (4) was doing down there instead of being at home in the schoolroom. A sudden angry eye above a coarse loudly talking mouth all but made her turn and go with instead of against the tide; but she pushed blindly on and through and presently found herself in a quiet street just off the station road looking into a shop window...‘1 lab. super cream-laid boudoir note—with envelopes—1s.’ Her eyes moved about the window from packet to packet, set askew and shining with freshness. If she (5) had not brought so much note-paper from home she (6) could have bought some. Perhaps she (7) could buy a packet as a Christmas present for Eve and have it in her top drawer all the time. But there was plenty of note-paper at home. She half-turned to go, and turning back fastened herself more closely against the window, meaninglessly reading the inscription on each packet. Standing back at last, she still (8) lingered. A little blue-painted tin plate sticking out from the side of the window announced in white letter ‘Carter Paterson.’ Miriam dimly wondered at the connection. Underneath it hung a cardboard printed in ink, ‘Circulating Library, 2d. weekly.’ This was still more mysterious. She timidly (9) approached the door and met the large pleasant eye of a man standing back in the doorway.

‘Is there a library here?’ she (10) said with beating heart.

1. _____________________  6. ____________________________
2. _____________________  7. ____________________________
3. _____________________  8. ____________________________
4. _____________________  9. ____________________________
5. _____________________ 10. ____________________________

**EXERCISE 8.4: MIXED TENSE-ASPECT LABELS.**

Provide the tense-aspect labels for the verbs in the following passage.
She (1) **stood** so long reading and re-reading half-familiar titles, *Comes up as a Flower, Not like other Girls, The Heir of Wickliffe*, books that she and Harriet (2) **had read** and books that she felt were of a similar type, that tea was already on the schoolroom table when she (3) **reached** Wordsworth House with an unknown volume by Mrs. Hunderford under her arm. Hiding it upstairs, she came down to tea and sat recovering her composure over her paper-covered *Cinq Mars*, a relic of the senior Oxford examination now grown suddenly rich and amazing. To-day it (4) **could not hold** her. *The Madcap* was upstairs, and beyond it an unlimited supply of two-penny volumes and Quida. Red-bound volumes of Quida on the bottom shelf (5) **had sent** her eyes quickly back to the safety of the upper rows. Through the whole of tea-time she was quietly aware of a discussion going on at the back of her mind as to who it was who (6) **had membered** her father's voice saying that Quida was an extremely able woman, quite a politician. Then of course her books were all right, for grown-up people. It (7) **must have been** someone at a dance who (8) **had made** her curious about them, some she (9) **had forgotten**. In any case, whatever they were, there was no one now to prevent her from reading them if she chose. She (10) **would read** them if she chose. Write to Eve about it first. No. Certainly not. Eve (11) *might say* ‘Better not, my dear. You (12) **will regret** it if you do. You(13) **won’t be the same.’ Eve was different. She (14) **must not be led** by Eve in any case. She (15) **must leave off** being led by Eve—or anybody. The figures sitting around the table, bent over their books, quietly disinclined for conversation or mischief under the shrewd eye of Miss Haddie, suddenly looked exciting and mysterious. But perhaps the man in the shop (16) **would be shocked**. It (17) **would be** impossible to ask for them; unless she (18) **could pretend** she did not know anything about them. [Dorothy M. Richardson. 1979. *Pilgrimage 1*. London: Virago Press. Pp. 278-82.]

1. _____________________ 10. ____________________________
2. _____________________ 11. ____________________________
3. _____________________ 12. ____________________________
4. _____________________ 13. ____________________________
5. _____________________ 14. ____________________________
6. _____________________ 15. ____________________________
7. _____________________ 16. ____________________________
8. _____________________ 17. ____________________________
9. _____________________ 18. ____________________________

The meanings of modals

Unlike more typical verbs, most modals have at least two basic meanings, and many have three or more. Without doubt, each of the nine modals listed has its own unique range of meanings, and each of the nine modals has its own idiosyncratic range of uses and range of meanings.

‘Basic’ versus the ‘epistemic’ meanings. Most modals can express at least two distinct kinds of meaning: an epistemic meaning related to probability and one or more basic or root meanings not related to probability. The epistemic (=probability-related) uses include considerations of possibility, probability, logical necessity, real versus unreal, and so on. The ‘basic’ (=non-probability-related) uses include such considerations as ability, willingness, permission, obligation, and so on.

For instance, in sentence (a), may reports how probable the speaker thinks Bill's death is. In sentence (b), may reports permission and, in sentence (c), may is used as part of a blessing (or curse).

a. Bill may be dead.

b. The judge said that Bill may visit the children any time he wants to.

c. May the Lord bless you.

In a way parallel to its use in sentence (c), may can be used as part of a curse, for example, May you rot in hell.
In a similar way, *can* also has a probability meaning and several non-probability meanings. In sentence (a) below, *can* reports that something is not possible (a comment on probability). In sentence (b), *can* reports ability and, in sentence (c), *can* reports permission.

a. It *can't* be. (probability, that is, it is not possible)

b. He *can* dance; in fact, he is quite good at it. (=ability)

c. The judge said that Bill *can* visit the children any time he wants to. (=permission)

Permission. Can and could both indicate present or future permission; could also may be used to indicate past permission with the implication of a changed state. May is quite parallel to can in its ability to indicate permission. In some instances, however, may is the prescriptively preferred form. => be allowed to, be permitted to

The probability-related modals report different degrees of probability about whether the assertion in the sentence is true, and thus can be ranked in order of strength. 1,2,3,4,5,6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>degree of possibility</th>
<th>example:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>must</td>
<td>certainty; logically so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>should</td>
<td>strong possibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bill must be dead</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bill should be dead</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The use of any of the modals—even the use of *must*, which supposedly indicates 'complete sureness'—is a qualification. Even stronger is the 'complete sureness' of an unqualified verb: *Bill is dead.*

2. Notice that the use of *should* here implies that logic suggests that Bill should be dead, but leaves open the possibility that nonetheless he is not.

3. *Must* does, however, occur in statements which have the form of questions. For example, *Mustn't there be a more reasonable solution to the problem?* is not really a question but rather equivalent to a statement such as *There must be a more reasonable solution to the problem.*

4. In such questions, an inquiry about "ability" implies an inquiry about "willingness" as well.

5. These three patterns are described more fully in the section "Will it fall, or won't it?" at the end of this chapter.

6. It is crucial to note that the difference in usage lies not in the real world, but in how the speaker treats the real world. Certainly, there is often a difference between what we treat as real and what is actually real. Here, the difference is not between what is "real" and what is "hypothetical", but between the speaker (or, at least, *treats* as real), and what the speaker treats as hypothetical. When using *will* and *can*, the speaker is treating the events in question as if they were real possibilities, and when using *would* and *could*, the speaker is treating the events in question as hypothetical.
will; would  conditional possibility   ‘Bill will be dead’
may; might  weak possibility      ‘Bill might be dead’
can; could  weak possibility      ‘Bill could be dead’

**Other.** In addition, one particular meaning distinction between *will* and *would* and between *can* and *could* is illustrated not in this section but in the teaching section with sample materials (discussed under the cover term *conditionals*). Whether or not you intend to teach, an examination of these materials should help make the meanings of these modals clearer.

**Asymmetry.** Another characteristic of modals is their asymmetry. That is, a statement made with one modal may be negated with another; a question asked with one modal may be negated with another; and so on.

*Must* indicates something about which you have very little doubt, something that you have concluded on the basis of some sort of indirect evidence. For instance, if I have put some bread in the toaster and I smell smoke a few minutes later, I might say,

“I smell smoke. The toast *must* be burning.”

However, if you had already removed the bread after I put it in, you could negate what I said, not by using a negative with *must*, but by using a negative with *can*,

“It *can’t* be. I already took it out.”

The negation of this sense of *must* is not *mustn’t*, but rather is *can’t*. With this meaning, *must* is used in positive sentences, while *can* is used with either interrogative or negative ones. As this illustrates, questions asked with one modal sometimes require answers expressed with another.

**EXERCISE 8.5: MODALS.**

Example with sample answer: The modal *must* has a different meaning in each of the examples below. Describe this difference.

For these questions, the most important part of the answer is to distinguish between those with epistemic answers having to do with possibility, probability, and certainty, on the
one hand, and those having to do with the basic or root meanings, such as necessity obligation, permission, ability, and so on.

1. The problem must be difficult. certainty (epistemic)
2. That man must take medicine every hour. necessity (root or basic)

The modal must has a different meaning in each of the examples below. Describe this difference.

3. Gerard must obey the law. ______________
4. The doctor must be at the hospital by now. ______________

The modal may has a different meaning in each of the examples below. Describe this difference. Note: These characterizations are found in the text above.

5. Bill may be dead. ______________
6. Bill may visit the car any time he wants to. ______________
7. May the Lord bless you. ______________

The modal may has a different meaning in each of the examples below. Describe this difference.

8. The judge declared that Oscar may enter the country after the first of the year. ______________
9. Elizabeth may be at the door. ______________

The modal can has a different meaning in each of the examples below. Describe this difference.

10. Bill can come in any time he wants. ______________
11. Bill can play basketball rather well. ______________
12. Can Bill be here yet? ______________
The conditionals and how to teach them

Textbooks often teach only three standard patterns for conditional sentences—sentences of the form *If... (then)...*—but it is obvious that numerous other combinations exist. The basic three do, however, form an excellent starting point.

It is not teaching the patterns themselves that represents the greatest challenge to teachers; it is teaching the meanings of the patterns that presents the greatest difficulty.

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Will and can</strong></td>
<td>In talking about the future, we treat some things as if we <em>expect</em> them to happen; when we do this, we typically use <em>will</em> (or <em>can</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Would and could.</strong></td>
<td>In talking about other things, it is clear that we treat them as hypothetical. When we do this, we typically use <em>would</em> (or <em>could</em>).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Would have and could have.</strong></td>
<td>Finally, the third pattern is used to speculate about how things might have been different in the past. In discussing such things, we typically use <em>would have</em> and <em>could have</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In part, you can learn something about the meanings of the three patterns from the discussion, but more than likely you will learn more by carefully examining the examples and then correlate the patterns with types of situations.

In an attempt to begin teaching the meanings of the patterns, each pattern is presented in association with a given situation.
EXERCISE 8.6: *would/could* versus *will/can*.

Discuss the differences between the use of *would/could* versus *will/can* as reflected in these paragraphs. Phrase your answer in such a way that it would be useful to a student trying to learn how to use modals.

I am sorry the trade of the smart fools has been abolished. I *would certainly apply* for a job if the profession *were* still extant, and I *would be* a perfect fool, if I *could*. *Would* n’t it be useful for modern statesmen to have around some earthly fool like myself, expressing his honest opinion and making fun of their vanity? My opinions *would be* very scientific as any modern fool’s *would have* to be and I *would commute* between the great capitals of the world in my private jet.

Instead, I *will get* a job as a secretary this summer. When my boss says something stupid, I *will say*, “*Yes, sir.*”

Sample materials:

Contrary to fact situations [with a few real situations sprinkled in]:

{stolen from Camy Colby}

1. Suggest three things you would do if you won ten thousand dollars.

Example: If I won ten thousand dollars, first I would phone my husband from the airport to tell him, and then I would fly to Hawaii. When the money was all gone, I would fly back from Hawaii and phone my husband again to have him pick me up at the airport.

2. Suggest three things you would do if there were a fire in your house.

3. Suggest three things you would do if you saw a burglar in your house.

4. Tell three things you will do when you get home from class today.

5. Suggest three things you would do if you got a flat tire on the freeway.
6. Suggest three things you would do if you were depressed.

7. Tell three things you will do next semester.

8. Tell three things you would do next semester, if you didn't have to go to school.

9. What plans would you make if you were given a free trip around the world?

10. If you could eat anything you wanted, what would you eat?

11. Because you probably don't have much choice, what will you eat today

**EXERCISE 8.7: WOULD/COULD VERSUS WILL/CAN.**

Imagine that you are teaching and you have given the students in your class the assignment below. Which of the two paragraphs below will require the use of *will* and *can* and which will require the use of *would* and *could*. Why? Phrase your answer in such a way that it would be useful to a student trying to learn how to use modals.

Instructions: Write two paragraphs with the topic sentences given below.

**The future: facts and fantasy**

If I were suddenly given a million dollars to spend this year, I would do many things that I cannot afford to do now. For instance, ___

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

_____________________

However, because no one is really going to give me a million dollars, what I will actually do this year is quite different. Probably, ___

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________
Materials: “Will it fall, or won't it?”

The main point of sample materials is to help give you a way to understand the meanings of various constructions. If, in addition, they are of additional help to those of you who end up teaching, this is simply an additional bonus.

Pattern 1 in situation 1: The situation is real. The teacher is about to add yet another rod to the structure. The students are asked about what they think will happen.\footnote{Getting the structure to collapse is easy. It is keeping it from falling down before you want it to that makes you start mumbling to yourself.}

If I add another one, will it fall?
You don't know? Well, what do you think will happen?
Do you think it will fall?
Will it, or won't it?
How many of you think it will fall?
How many (of you) think it won't?
Pattern 2 in situation 2: Still the only person about to add another rod to the structure is the teacher. Because it is clear that only the teacher is about to add rods, when they are asked whether they would add more rods if they were the teacher, the students are being asked to talk about a situation that is not real—a hypothetical situation.

If you were me, would you add another one?

Would you?

Would you or wouldn't you?

How many of you would (add another)?

How many (of you) wouldn't?

Notice that both of the patterns illustrate the same thing but from different viewpoints. The first pattern talks about what speakers treat as they think it will come to be; the second speculates about things other than what the speaker expects to happen.

Pattern 3 in situation 3: The addition of the last rod caused the whole structure to collapse. The building process has come to a rather well-defined stop. Now the students are asked whether they would have added that crucial last rod.

If you had been me, would you have added the last one?¹

Would you have?

¹ If, like many speakers of English, you substitute were for had been in this particular construction, make an effort to use had been instead, because all the other examples of this pattern will follow the had been not the were pattern.
Would you have, or wouldn’t you have?
If Sharon had added another rod, would it have fallen?

Teaching note: The same three situations can also be set up in a classroom using the game tic-tac-toe. Have the teacher and a student in the back of the class play, with the student calling out his moves.

1. The first pattern is used to discuss what the two players will or won't do.
2. The second pattern is used to discuss what other students in the class would or wouldn't have done if they had gotten to play.
3. After the teacher has lost through making a grossly stupid move, the third pattern is used to discuss what various people would have done differently.

Teaching note: Needless to say all three patterns are not introduced at once. For lower levels, perhaps only the contrast between will and won’t is introduced before changing to another topic; for higher levels, bigger chunks can be introduced.

The patterns summarized. As the exercise progresses, many teachers will have begun to put the patterns on the board, so the patterns are developed out of the exercise. For many of you, however, it may be useful to set the patterns out explicitly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subordinate clause</th>
<th>Main clause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple present</td>
<td>will + verb root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. add</td>
<td>e.g. will fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple past</td>
<td>would + verb root</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. added</td>
<td>would fall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past perfect</td>
<td>would + have + past participle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.g. had added</td>
<td>e.g. would have fallen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Teaching note:

One problem that second language learners have with the conditionals comes from the fact that the words *would*, *have*, and *had* are usually reduced in normal speech to something like -’d and -’ve. Even for native speakers of English, this sometimes causes problems. At times the reduction of *have* to -’ve in speech causes confusion in their writing and results in their writing *of* instead of *have* in such phrases as *would have*. For second language learners, the difficulty is increased. For instance, both *would* and *had* are usually reduced to something like -’d. To write down what is being heard, the language learner has to learn when the -’d stands for *would* and when it stands for *had*.

As a consequence, all the reduced forms above make conditionals excellent dictation items. The teacher pronounces the forms normally—that is, with the forms reduced. The students then write down the full forms. This will help reinforce the connection between the spoken and the written forms for your students.

**EXERCISE 8.8: CONDITIONALS**

For the three basic patterns of conditionals, first characterize the situation each is used in, and then give an example of each pattern. Finally, tell what tense occurs in the subordinate clause and tell what modal and tense occurs in the main clause.

(1) Situation: ___________________________________________

Example: If___________________, _____________________

Pattern: If___________________, _____________________

(2) Situation: ___________________________________________

Example: If___________________, _____________________

Pattern: If___________________, _____________________

(3) Situation: ___________________________________________
Example: If___________________, _____________________

Pattern: If___________________, _____________________

The answers to this exercise are found in the discussion of the conditionals found earlier in the text, particularly in the discussion centering on ‘Will it fall, or won't it?’. One student insightfully characterized the three situations as ‘What is expected to happen,’ ‘An alternative to what is expected to happen,’ and ‘An alternative to a past situation.’

**Terms**

To check yourself, see if you can briefly describe each of the following terms and illustrate it in a phrase or sentence (underlining the relevant part).

**modals**

**meanings:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>basic</th>
<th>(=non-probability-related)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ability</td>
<td>obligation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>willingness</td>
<td>permission, and so on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>epistemic</th>
<th>(=probability-related)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>possible</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>probable</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>logically necessary, and so on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘conditionals’

| — the ‘first’ conditional: | what's expected            |
| — the ‘second’ conditional: | an alternative to what's expected |
| — the ‘third’ conditional: | an alternative to the past  |

Answers to Exercise 8.1:

1. past
6. past perfect
2. present progressive 7. present  
3. present perfect 8. past perfect  
4. past 9. past perfect (passive)  
5. past perfect progressive 10. present progressive

Note: These answers are the tense names, not descriptions of the time reference.

Answers to Exercise 8.2:

1. past 6. present  
2. past perfect 7. past  
3. present 8. past progressive  
4. present 9. present  
5. present progressive 10. past

Answers to Exercise 8.3:

1. past 6. past perfect  
2. past 7. past  
3. past progressive 8. past  
4. past progressive 9. past  
5. past perfect 10. past

Answers to Exercise 8.4:

1. past tense 10. past tense  
2. past perfect tense 11. past tense  
3. past tense 12. present tense (future)  
4. past tense 13. present tense (future)  
5. past perfect tense 14. present tense  
6. past perfect tense 15. present tense  
7. present perfect tense 16. past tense  
8. past perfect tense 17. past tense  
9. past perfect tense 18. past tense

Answers to Exercise 8.5:
For these questions, the most important part of the answer is to distinguish between those with epistemic answers having to do with possibility, probability, and certainty, on the one hand, and those having to do with the basic or root meanings, such as necessity obligation, permission, ability, and so on.

1. The problem must be difficult. certainty (epistemic)
2. That man must take medicine every hour. necessity (root)
3. Gerard must obey the law. obligation (root)
4. The doctor must be at the hospital by now. certainty (epistemic)
5. Bill may be dead. possibility (epistemic)
6. Bill may visit the car any time he wants to. permission (root)
7. May the Lord bless you. blessing (root)
8. The judge declared that Oscar may enter the country after the first of the year. permission (root)
9. Elizabeth may be at the door. possibility (epistemic)
10. Bill can come in any time he wants. permission (root)
11. Bill can play basketball rather well. ability (root)
12. Can Bill be here yet? possibility (epistemic)

Answers to Exercise 8.6:

Would and could are used to treat events as hypothetical situations, while can and will are used to treat events as real possibilities.

Answers to Exercise 8.7:

Would and could are used to treat events as hypothetical situations, while can and will are used to treat events as real possibilities.