

# Language Awareness for Key Stage 3

## 12: Mood and Modals

Key Terms	Optional Terms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mood</li> <li>• Indicative</li> <li>• Imperative</li> <li>• Subjunctive</li> <li>• Modal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auxiliary</li> </ul>

- Introduction: Mood and Modals
  - We have already looked at various categories that verbs can have, such as tense, aspect, and voice
  - Mood is another category on a par with these
  - Mood can provide information on the relationship between the **person speaking** and the **event described**
  - But the best way to understand mood may be to look at examples of different moods
- Tense
  - The indicative mood is the ‘ordinary’, default mood
    - It is the most frequently used mood, which we normally see in sentences except for the special cases where other moods are used
  - It can be used for almost any purpose
    - I thought that John was at work
    - Are you there?
    - How happy Mary looks!
  - In English, there is no special ending or form that tells us these verbs are indicative
  - The imperative mood is used for orders and commands
    - Come here!
    - Go away!
    - Don't be silly!
  - In English, imperative verbs look the same as indicative verbs
  - One way to recognise imperative verbs is that they often occur without a subject
  - However, you can use a subject even with imperative verbs
    - You shut up!
      - This could be an order, in which case the verb is imperative
      - This could also just be a description of something that happened, in which case the verb is indicative
  - In some languages, such as Latin, the indicative and imperative have different forms, so you can tell which is which more easily
    - Tu taces! (indicative)
    - Tu tace! (imperative)
  - It's important to remember that not all orders and commands use the imperative mood
    - Leave!
    - You have to leave!
    - I order you to leave!
  - These last two sentences are in the indicative mood

- The indicative mood makes a statement about the real world
  - We can talk about whether it is true or false to say ‘You have to leave’
- The imperative mood lacks this connection to the real world
  - It doesn’t make sense to ask whether ‘Leave!’ is true

**Activity 1:**

Have a look at these sentences:

- Hit me again and I’ll tell Mum!
- Keep smoking like that and you’ll probably die young

In groups, discuss what mood you think *hit* and *keep* are. Are these sentences commands or orders? If not, what are they?

Notes

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- We have seen that the imperative can be used for more than orders, and that you can give orders without using the imperative
- People often use language to communicate things that are completely different from the basic meaning of the words used
- The subjunctive mood is used for things that are less real, or that you don’t want to treat as real
- You may have seen the subjunctive mood in some types of English sentence
  - I demand that he leave immediately
    - Notice that we don’t know whether he actually will leave or not
    - Some people might say ‘I demand that he leaves immediately’
  - I wish I were with you; if I were, I’d be happy
    - If you say ‘I wish I were there’, this means you’re not actually there
    - Some people might say ‘I wish I was’, ‘if I was’
- Not all English speakers use these special subjunctive forms
- If someone says ‘I wish I was with you,’ is the word was indicative or subjunctive?
- There is no easy answer to this question
- It depends on what is going on inside that person’s head, on whether they think of it as a separate sort of *was*
- This might be different for different people
- The subjunctive plays a bigger role in languages like French
- In French there are more special forms for the subjunctive, and many sentences where you have to use these forms
  - J’exige qu’il parte immédiatement  
‘I demand that he leave immediately’

- There are also sentences where you can use different moods with a difference in meaning
  - Je vais embaucher quelqu'un qui sait conduire  
'I'm going to hire someone who can drive'  
(I already have a specific person in mind)
  - Je vais embaucher quelqu'un qui sache conduire  
'I'm going to hire someone who can drive'  
(anyone who can drive that I might find)
- Modals
  - These French examples illustrate another way of talking about what is and isn't real: modals
  - Modals are a type of auxiliary, those little words that accompany verbs
  - Remember that we have already seen auxiliaries for tense, aspect and voice
    - I have been to London three times
    - I was just leaving when you called
    - I got mugged when I was on holiday
  - Modals are auxiliaries like *can*, with meanings that relate to what is possible, allowed, necessary, etc.
  - In English, there are some differences between modals and other verbs
    - Mary drives
    - Mary does drive
    - Mary can drive
    - ~~Mary can drive~~
  - However, this is not the case in most other languages
    - Marie conduit
    - Marie sait conduire

### Activity 2:

Take some time and try to make a list of all the English modals (the words like *can*). How many can you find?


- The meanings that can be expressed by mood on its own are usually quite simple and limited
  - Leave!
- Modals let you express much finer distinctions
  - You can leave
  - You may leave
  - You should leave
  - You must leave
- Conclusion
  - Today we have looked at the different moods that verbs can have
  - We have seen that the indicative is the most basic mood
  - The imperative is used mainly for commands
  - The subjunctive is used for things that may not be real
  - We have also seen that mood and modals provide different ways of saying similar things about reality
  - However, modals are separate words, with more specific meanings