

Language Awareness for Key Stage 3

13: Mood and Modals

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

- 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
- 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
- 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