Grammar Talk 6 - Modal Auxiliaries

1. A: I can tell you’re not feeling well. What’s wrong?
   B: I can’t concentrate. I have a headache.
   A: You should go home and take some aspirin.
   B: But, I shouldn’t miss this English lesson.
   A: But, you should try to get over your headache first.
   B: I hope I will be in class tomorrow.

2. A: What are you going to name your new baby?
   B: We might name her Julie or we might name her Mary.
   A: I think you should name her Julie.
   B: You do? We don’t know. We really can’t decide.
   A: You shouldn’t name her Mary. It’s too common.
   B: I guess you’re right. We must name her soon.

3. A: What’s the matter? I can tell you’re having trouble.
   B: I have to take my driving test, but my car isn’t working.
   A: You should try to postpone the test.
   B: You’re right. I can’t take it this week, but I can take it next week.
   A: You shouldn’t worry about postponing it.
   B: You’re right. I can’t take a test with a bad car.

4. A: What’s wrong? Are you having trouble?
   B: Yes, I am. I can’t find my car keys anywhere.
   A: You shouldn’t let it bother you.
   B: Can you possibly tell me where they are?
   A: You should try to remember the last time you used them.
   B: I must find them in five minutes. I have an appointment at ten.

5. A: Should I buy a bicycle or a motorcycle?
   B: I think you should buy a bicycle.
   A: Why should I buy a bicycle?
   B: They’re safer than motorcycles. That’s my opinion.
   A: I can’t ride a bicycle. I never learned how.
   B: I can teach you how. It isn’t very difficult.

6. A: When are you going to clean your apartment?
   B: I don’t know. I might clean it today, or I might clean it next week.
   A: I think you should clean it today.
   B: I don’t have to clean it today. Nobody is coming over tonight.
   A: You shouldn’t wait until you have visitors.
   B: But, I can’t clean it today. I don’t have time.

7. A: Would you like to go to Jack’s party with me?
   B: I shouldn’t go to that party. I don’t know anybody.
   A: You should go. You might meet interesting people.
   B: Also, I might have a terrible time.
   A: Must you always be a pessimist?
   B: OK. I’ll go to the party with you. But, can we leave early if it’s boring?

8. A: I want to get my learner’s permit at the DMV.
   B: You must take a written test.
   A: How many correct answers do I have to get?
   B: You must score 80 percent to pass the test.
   A: When I have a learner’s permit, what can I do?
   B: You can’t drive by yourself. You must drive with a licensed driver in the car.

9. A: Must I also take a vision test?
   B: That’s right. You have to take a vision test also.
   A: Must I bring proof of age?
   B: Yes, you have to bring a birth certificate or a passport.
   A: Can I use my alien registration card?
   B: I don’t know. You should bring it to the DMV when you go.

10. A: I want to get a driver’s license. How can I get one?
    B: You can practice driving. You should make sure you drive well.
    A: I can’t parallel park. My brother said he would teach me how.
    B: That’s good. You must take a road test for the license.
    A: Is the road test very difficult?
    B: It’s not difficult, but you have to prepare for it.
11. A: Bob is late to work today. I wonder what's wrong?  
B: It's hard to say. He could be stuck in traffic.  
A: Or, he could be sick, or his car could be broken.  
B: He might be out of town.  
A: Yes, that's a possibility. Or he might be on the bus.  
B: He's never this late. He must have a good reason.

12. A: Mary swims a lot and also runs every day.  
B: That's wonderful. She must be in very good shape.  
A: Jack has very few kitchen utensils.  
B: He must not cook very much. He must eat out a lot.  
A: Sylvia is getting a new passport picture.  
B: She must need to renew her passport.

B: I am upset. I'm baby-sitting for my one-year-old nephew. He's crying. I don't know why.  
A: Well, he might be hungry. You should feed him.  
B: I already tried to feed him. He still cries.  
A: His diaper might be wet. You should change him.  
B: I tried to change his diaper. It was dry.

14. A: He might be very tired. You should try to put him to sleep.  
B: I tried to put him in bed. But he's still crying.  
A: He's just nervous. You should try to calm him down.  
B: That's a good idea. He might like music.  
A: Yes, he might like your song. You should sing to him.  
B: Wait. I don't hear him crying now. He must be asleep.

15. A: Why is Stan returning the CD he got for his birthday?  
B: I don't know. He must not like it.  
A: Joy is very bright, but she doesn't get good grades.  
B: She might not study hard enough. She should study harder.  
A: Steve gets headaches when he reads books.  
B: I think he might need glasses.

16. A: Mr. Jones, I'm really worried about your lungs.  
B: Really, Doctor? Should I stop smoking?  
A: Yes, you must stop smoking or you'll have serious problems.

16. (cont) B: But, Doctor, I can't quit smoking, I just can't.  
A: Yes, you can. Anyone can quit smoking if they really want to.  
B: All right, I'll quit, even though it will be hard.

17. A: Mrs. Parker, I'm really worried about your high blood pressure.  
B: Really, Doctor? Should I cut down on salty food?  
A: Yes, you must stop eating salty food or you'll have serious heart problems.  
B: I can't stop eating salty food, I just can't.  
A: You shouldn't say that. You can control what you eat.  
B: All right, Doctor. I'll stop eating salty food, even though it will be difficult..

18. A: I won't be able to help you move tomorrow.  
B: You won't? Did something come up?  
A: Yes, I've got to take my son to the doctor.  
B: That's all right. I'll be able to move by myself.  
A: I won't be able to help Mary clean her garage, either.  
B: No problem. I'm sure she'll be able to clean it by herself.

19. A: Was Jimmy able to lift his grandmother's suitcase?  
B: No, he wasn't able to lift it. It was too heavy.  
A: Was Louise able to paint her house yesterday?  
B: No, she wasn't able to paint it. It was too windy.  
A: Were your children able to see the fireworks last night?  
B: No, they weren't able to see them. There were too many buildings in the way.

20. A: It must be late. Could you tell me time?  
B: Sure. It's five thirty. You must be hungry.  
A: Yes, I think I'll have an early dinner. I shouldn't stay up late.  
B: I have to get up early tomorrow. I can't stay out late.  
A: There's a good restaurant nearby, but I can't remember the name.  
B: I know which one you mean. They have excellent burritos there.  
A: Let's go grab an early supper.