PRACTICALLY PERSUASIVE

LIST OF MODAL VERBS

**Modality** is concerned with degrees of possibility, probability, or certainty. Modality is expressed through auxiliary verbs or modifiers such as may be, should go, and certainly.

**Modal verbs** are a set of verbs such as can, may, might, will, which are used to express different degrees of certainty.

**A list of common Modal Verbs:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| High Modality | Medium Modality | Low Modality |
| Must | Will | May |
| Mustn’t | Won’t | Might |
| Ought to | Should | Mightn’t |
| Shall | Shouldn’t | Could |
| Shan’t | Can | Couldn’t |
| Has to | Can’t | Would |
| Have to | Need to | Wouldn’t |

**Experimenting with modal verbs and modal adverbs (intensifiers)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Modality type** | **‘Everyday language’** | **More precise language with modal adverbs (intensifiers)** |
| low modality | might feel bad | might possibly experience discomfort or embarrassment or might possibly have an impact on student confidence |
| medium modality | will feel bad | will probably experience discomfort and embarrassment or would probably have a significant impact on student confidence |
| high modality | will absolutely feel bad | will definitely experience discomfort and embarrassment or would certainly have a significant impact on student confidence |

Students can write the sentences they are celebrating on a shared digital space. The teacher can then lead a discussion of the characteristics of the celebratory sentences. This can provide opportunities for the class to see and understand what makes successful writing in the particular genre being studied, such as the examples detailed below that explore the use of modality in persuasive texts.

Discussion of the example sentences could include discussion points such as the following:

* Modal verbs of different strength such as might, will, must can modulate the writer’s stance or position.
* Modal adverbs or intensifiers of different strength such as possibly, probably, certainly can also modulate the writer’s stance or position.
* More precise language choice such as ‘experience’ instead of ‘feel’, ‘discomfort’ or ‘embarrassment’ instead of ‘bad’ suggest a stronger sense of negative attitudes or feelings.
* Including a noun group such as ‘a significant impact on student confidence’ is more ‘written like’ or academic language and provides a sense of the author’s authority or expertise on the topic.