NDA GAT • ENGLISH GRAMMAR REVISION NOTES

Modal Auxiliaries

Core Grammar Rules, Quick Reference Chart, High-Frequency Exam Traps & 16 NDA-Pattern MCQs

1. Core Rules of Modals (NDA Exam Basics)

Modal auxiliaries express mood or attitude—ability, permission, obligation, probability, or advice. In the NDA GAT English paper, modals are tested primarily in **Fill in the Blanks**, **Spotting Errors**, and **Sentence Improvement**.

- **Always followed by V_1 (base verb):** Never use `to + V1` after pure modals (only *ought to* and *used to* take *to*).
  Incorrect: He can to swim. | Correct: He **can swim**.
- **No subject-verb agreement changes:** Modals never take *-s*, *-es*, *-ed*, or *-ing* regardless of whether the subject is singular or plural.
- **No double modals:** Two modals cannot be used together in the same clause.
  Incorrect: You should must work hard. | Correct: You **must** work hard.
- **Passive voice structure:** `Modal + be + V3` — e.g., *The order **must be obeyed**.*
- **Past deduction or regret:** `Modal + have + V3` — e.g., *You **should have informed** the commander.*

2. Modal Verbs Quick Reference Table

Modal	Primary Uses	NDA Exam Example
Can	Present ability, informal permission, general possibility	He **can** run 5 km in 20 minutes.
Could	Past ability, polite request, remote possibility	**Could** you pass the map, please?
May	Formal permission, possibility, wishes/blessings, purpose	**May** you succeed in the SSB!
Might	Weak/remote possibility, past tense of *may* in indirect speech	It **might** rain tonight, though the sky is clear.
Must	Strong obligation, necessity, logical deduction, prohibition (*must not*)	Candidates **must** carry their admit cards.
Should	Moral duty, advice, expectation, after *lest*	You **should** revise previous year papers.
Ought to	Moral obligation, duty (stronger moral tone than *should*)	We **ought to** respect our veterans.

Modal	Primary Uses	NDA Exam Example
Shall	1st person (*I/We*) simple future; 2nd/3rd person (*You/He/They*) for **command, promise, or threat**	Trespassers **shall** be prosecuted.
Will	2nd/3rd person simple future; 1st person (*I/We*) for **determination, promise, or willingness**	I **will** clear the NDA exam this year.
Would	Polite request, past habit, preference (*would rather*), unreal conditionals	He **would** walk five miles every morning.
Used to	Discontinued past habit or state	I **used to** live in Dehradun.
Need / Dare	Semi-modals: necessity (*need*) and courage (*dare*)	You **need not** worry about the result.

3. High-Frequency NDA Exam Traps

1. **The "Lest … should" Rule:** *Lest* means "for fear that" and is already negative. It is **always** followed by **should** (never *will*, *would*, *may*, or *not*).
   Correct: Walk carefully **lest** you **should** fall.
2. **Purpose Clauses (*so that / in order that*):** Present tense in the main clause takes **may**; past tense takes **might**.
   Examples: We eat **so that** we **may** live. / He worked hard **so that** he **might** pass.
3. ***Used to* vs. *Be / Get used to*:**
   `Subject + used to + V1` = Past habit (*He **used to smoke**.*)
   `Subject + is/am/are/was/were/get + used to + V-ing` = Habituated or accustomed to (*He **is used to waking** up at 5 AM.*)
4. ***Need* and *Dare* (Modal vs. Main Verb):**
   As **modals** (negative & interrogative): take bare infinitive (V_1) without *to* and no *-s* — *He **need not go** there. / **Dare** he **challenge** the order?*
   As **main verbs** (affirmative): take `to + V1` and follow subject-verb agreement — *He **needs to go** there. / She **dares to speak** the truth.*
5. ***Would rather / Had better*:** Always followed by the bare infinitive (V_1), never `to + V1`. *Would rather* pairs with *than*.
   Examples: I **would rather die** than beg. / You **had better leave** now.
6. **Past Obligation (*Must* vs. *Had to*):** *Must* has no past tense form for obligation. Use **had to** instead.
   Incorrect: Yesterday I must finish the report. | Correct: Yesterday I **had to** finish the report.

> **NDA Exam Strategy — 3-Second Elimination Check**
>
> Whenever you spot a modal in an error-spotting or blank-filling question, check three things immediately: (1) Is there an extra *to* after a pure modal or *had better*? (2) Does the sentence contain a trigger word like *lest*, *so that*, or *is used to*? (3) Does the tense of the main clause match the modal?

4. NDA Pattern Practice MCQs

PART A: FILL IN THE BLANKS

1. Work hard lest you _____ fail in the examination.

(A) will (B) would (C) should (D) may

2. He _____ play football for his school when he was young.

(A) is used to (B) used to (C) ought to (D) dares to

3. You _____ not worry about the medical test; you are completely fit.

(A) need (B) needs (C) must to (D) ought

4. He worked day and night so that he _____ secure a rank in the merit list.

(A) may (B) might (C) can (D) shall

5. The lights are on in his room; he _____ be studying.

(A) must (B) need (C) dare (D) ought

6. Run fast lest you _____ miss the train.

(A) will (B) should (C) may (D) might

7. Trespassers _____ be prosecuted.

(A) shall (B) might (C) could (D) would

8. How _____ you disobey a direct order?

(A) need (B) dare (C) ought (D) used

9. I would rather starve _____ beg.

(A) to (B) than (C) then (D) from

10. You _____ have informed me earlier; now it is too late.

(A) should (B) can (C) will (D) may

PART B: SPOTTING ERRORS

Identify the segment (A, B, or C) that contains a grammatical error. Choose (D) if there is no error.

11. (A) You had better / (B) to consult a doctor / (C) before the fever gets worse. / (D) No error.

12. (A) He is used to / (B) wake up early / (C) in the morning. / (D) No error.

13. (A) She needs not / (B) come to the office / (C) tomorrow. / (D) No error.

14. (A) Candidates must / (B) to bring their / (C) original ID cards. / (D) No error.

15. (A) He is used to / (B) drive on / (C) hilly roads. / (D) No error.

16. (A) Yesterday I must / (B) stay back late / (C) to finish the briefing. / (D) No error.

5. Answer Key & Explanations

Q. No.	Answer	NDA Grammar Rule & Explanation
1	**(C) should**	*Lest* is always paired with *should* and never takes a negative word.
2	**(B) used to**	Indicates a discontinued past habit (`used to + V1`).
3	**(A) need**	Used as a modal auxiliary in a negative sentence (`need not + V1` , no *-s*).
4	**(B) might**	The main clause is in the past tense (*worked*), so *so that* takes *might*.
5	**(A) must**	Expresses a strong logical deduction based on evidence (the lights are on).
6	**(B) should**	*Lest* is always followed by *should*.
7	**(A) shall**	*Shall* with 2nd/3rd person subjects expresses a legal command, threat, or official warning.
8	**(B) dare**	*Dare* as a modal auxiliary expresses challenge or indignation in interrogative sentences.
9	**(B) than**	*Would rather* is always paired with *than* followed by a bare infinitive.
10	**(A) should**	`Should have + V3` expresses unfulfilled past duty or regret.
11	**(B)**	Replace *to consult* with **consult** (*had better* takes a bare infinitive).
12	**(B)**	Replace *wake* with **waking** (`is used to + V-ing`).
13	**(A)**	Replace *needs not* with **need not** (as a modal in a negative sentence, *need* does not take *-s*).
14	**(B)**	Replace *to bring* with **bring** (pure modals like *must* take a bare infinitive, not `to + V1`).
15	**(B)**	Replace *drive* with **driving** (`be + used to` takes a gerund, V-ing).
16	**(A)**	Replace *must* with **had to** (*must* cannot be used for past obligation).