

## SUBJECTIVE USE OF MODAL VERBS OVERVIEW

Modal verbs can have either an **objective** or a **subjective** meaning, depending on what the speaker wishes to communicate.

PRESENT TENSE		
Objective Meaning <i>(Speaker is communicating a fact)</i>	Subjective Meaning <i>(Speaker is making a conjecture; communicating a personal point of view)</i>	<i>(Degree of certainty on part of speaker)</i>
Er <b>muss</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He must [has to] play soccer.)</i> =he is being compelled to play, as in context: "He must play soccer, in order to get a scholarship."	Er <b>muss</b> (wohl) Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He must play soccer.)</i> = Speaker is fairly certain that he plays soccer, as in context: "He grew up in Germany, so he must play soccer."	<i>(Speaker is fairly certain.)</i>
Er <b>kann</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He is able to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>kann</b> ( <b>könnte</b> ) Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He could play soccer.)</i> = Speaker is assuming that he plays, but is not certain.)	↓
Er <b>darf</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He is allowed to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>darf</b> ( <b>dürfte</b> ) Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He may/might play soccer.)</i> = Speaker thinks he may play, but is not so sure.	<i>(Speaker is not so sure.)</i>
Er <b>mag</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He likes to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>mag</b> (wohl) Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He may/might play soccer.)</i> = Speaker thinks he may play, but is not so sure.	↓
Er <b>soll</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He ought to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>soll</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He is said to play soccer.)</i> = Speaker has heard this from another source.	<i>(Speaker is neutral; is only reporting what he/she has heard/)</i>
Er <b>will</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He wants to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>will</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . <i>(He claims to play soccer.)</i> = Speaker doubts that he really does play.	↓ <i>(Speaker is skeptical.)</i>

In the **Past Tense**, the objective and subjective uses are formed differently, both in English and in German. The **Past Tense of the Subjective usage** is formed as follows:

PAST TENSE	
Objective Meaning	Subjective Meaning
	<b>Present Tense of the Modal + Past Infinitive</b> <i>[Past Infinitive = Participle + haben or sein:</i> <b>gespielt haben</b> <b>gegangen sein</b>
Er <b>musste</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . Er <b>hat</b> Fußball <b>spielen müssen</b> . <i>(He had to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>muss</b> Fußball <b>gespielt haben</b> . <i>(He must have played soccer.)</i>
Sie <b>musste</b> nach Hause <b>gehen</b> . Sie <b>hat</b> nach Hause <b>gehen müssen</b> . <i>(She had to go home.)</i>	Sie <b>muss</b> nach Hause <b>gegangen sein</b> . <i>(She must have gone home.)</i>

## Objective and Subjective Use of Modals: Past Tense

PAST TENSE		
Objective Meaning <i>(Speaker is communicating a fact)</i>	Subjective Meaning <i>(Speaker is making an assumption; communicating a personal point of view)</i>	<i>(Degree of certainty on part of speaker)</i>
Er <b>musste</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . Er <b>hat</b> Fußball <b>spielen müssen</b> . <i>(He had to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>muss</b> (wohl) Fußball <b>gespielt haben</b> . <i>(He must have played soccer.)</i>	<i>(Speaker is fairly certain.)</i>
Er <b>konnte</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . Er <b>hat</b> Fußball <b>spielen können</b> . <i>(He was able to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>kann</b> ( <b>könnte</b> ) Fußball <b>gespielt haben</b> . <i>(He could have played soccer.)</i>	↓
Er <b>durfte</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . Er <b>hat</b> Fußball <b>spielen dürfen</b> . <i>(He was allowed to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>darf</b> ( <b>dürfte</b> ) Fußball <b>gespielt haben</b> . <i>(He may/might have played soccer.)</i>	<i>(Speaker is not so sure.)</i>
Er <b>mochte</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . Er <b>hat</b> Fußball <b>spielen mögen</b> . <i>(He liked to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>mag</b> (wohl) Fußball <b>gespielt haben</b> . <i>(He may/might have played soccer.)</i>	↓
Er <b>sollte</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . Er <b>hat</b> Fußball <b>spielen sollen</b> . <i>(He should have played soccer.)</i>	Er <b>soll</b> Fußball <b>gespielt haben</b> . <i>(He is said to have played soccer.)</i>	<i>(Speaker is neutral; is only reporting what he/she has heard/)</i>
Er <b>wollte</b> Fußball <b>spielen</b> . Er <b>hat</b> Fußball <b>spielen wollen</b> . <i>(He wanted to play soccer.)</i>	Er <b>will</b> Fußball <b>gespielt haben</b> . <i>(He claims to have played soccer.)</i>	↓ <i>(Speaker is skeptical.)</i>

Note that in the subjective usage, the past tense is formed with the present tense of **modal** + the **past infinitive** of the other verb. The **past infinitive** is the **past participle** + **sein** or **haben**:

Past Infinitives:      **gespielt haben**  
                                  **gefragt haben**  
                                  **gearbeitet haben**  
                                  **gegangen sein**  
                                  **gewesen sein**  
                                  *etc.*