

(Definitions of commonly used verbs in the Directives)

1110.8 - Exhibit 01

Degree of Compliance or Restriction

Helping Verbs	Degree of Compliance or Restriction
must, shall	Action is mandatory and full compliance is required, unless specifically waived in accordance with FSM 1103. Note: Do not use “shall” to command inanimate objects. For example, it is incorrect to say: “The plan shall contain . . .”;
should, ought	Action is mandatory, unless a justifiable reason exists for not taking action. The use of “should” and “ought” signals that the directive originator recognizes that extenuating circumstances are likely to occur at times.
may not	Action is prohibited.
may only	Action is permitted only in the circumstance(s) described. Often used in delegating authority or limiting delegated authority.
may	Action is optional.
will	This verb does not convey a degree of restriction or mandate action. The use of “will” applies only to a statement of future condition or an expression of time. Do not use in place of “shall” or “must.”
can	This verb is not directive; it expresses inherent capability.

Mood of Verb	Degree of Compliance or Restriction
imperative	Direction written with a verb in the imperative mood is also mandatory. For example: “Ensure cost-efficient delivery of services.” In this sentence, the missing subject is understood to be “you” and the direction (“ensure cost-efficient delivery of services”) is a direct command meaning “you shall ensure.” The verb “ensure”, is in the imperative mood. Where there are multiple audiences of a directive (such as line officers and staff officers), use of the imperative verb is appropriate only if it applies to all segments of the audience.