MAY & CAN

MAY

REQUEST (polite)
May I borrow your
book?

PERMISSION (polite)
All employees may
take the day off.

POSSIBILITY (not certain)
It may snow tomorrow.

PROHIBITION (no permission) You may not smoke in my house.

WISH
May all your dreams
come true.

CAN

REQUEST (informal)
Can I borrow your
book?

PERMISSION (informal) All employees can take the day off.

POSSIBILITY (general statement) It can snow a lot in winter.

OFFER
Can I give you a hand?

ABILITY
She can play the guitar.