

6.2

Modals: Possibility

Present and Future

- We use **'may', 'might' and 'could'** + **infinitive** to express present or future possibility. May expresses a greater degree of certainty
*The storm **may / might / could** happen tomorrow.*
- **'Could'** can be used instead of **'may'** and **'might'** with the verb be
*He **could still be** waiting for us.*
*This **could be** right.*
- **'Can'** may express general possibility but not with future time reference.
*During the flood, people **can suffer** from starvation, especially from clean water.*
- **'Will'** + **bare infinitive** can be used when we are certain about something that will happen in the future.
*There **will be** a lot of people coming to the graduation ceremony this year.*

Present and Future

- **'Must'** + **bare infinitive** can be used when we are certain about something that is true, or is supposed to be like
 - You have been working for several hours. You **must be** exhausted.
- Use **'may not'** and **'might not'** + **bare infinitive** to describe things that will possibly not happen in the future.
 - Flood **will not** happen this year because we have well prepared to handle the big amount of rainfalls.
- Use **'can't'** + **bare infinitive** when we are certain that something is not true or impossible (usually with be)
 - You **can't know** the result. That's impossible!
 - This **can't be** the right answer.

Past

- We use 'may', 'might' and 'could' + have + past participle to express uncertainty with reference to past actions.
 - We haven't heard from him for ten years. He may/might/could have died.
(Perhaps he has died, but we don't know.)
- But we use 'might' and 'could' + have + past participle when we want to express what was possible in the past and what actually happened.
 - They were very careless when crossing the road. They might/could have died.
(He didn't die.)
 - I could have caught the bus if I had hurried. (I didn't hurry, so I didn't catch the bus.)


Past

- We use **'can't'** + **have** + **past participle** to express certainty about something that was not true.
 - She hasn't called me back; she **can't have received** my message.
- We use **'must'** + **have** + **past participle** to express certainty about something that was true.
 - It **must have been** love, but it's over now.



EXERCISE

Exercise 1 Complete the sentence with may, may not, can't.

1. Take an umbrella with you. It may rain.
 2. We may not / can't go to the cinema this evening. I'm not quite sure yet but we still have other things to do.
 3. If you buy a lottery, you may have a chance to win.
 4. Sam may be abroad because I just saw him this morning.
 5. They're coming this week but I don't know which day. This means they may be coming tomorrow.
 6. I'm not sure I'll pass the exam. I couldn't do well. I think I may not pass it.
 7. I'm going shopping with friends but I think I may not / can't buy anything because I'm nearly broke.
 8. Emma isn't in her room. She may be in the kitchen. I hear someone talking there.
 9. Sue may not / can't come to the party because she is busy checking homework for her lesson.
 10. I have a bad cold today. I may not go to school tomorrow. I'll call you if I can go.
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Exercise 2 Somebody is asking you about your plans for the summer.
You have some ideas but you are not sure.

take a cab , have a conference with colleagues , see her soon , go to Italy , have something spicy

1. Where are you going this summer?

I'm not sure. I may **go to Italy**

2. What are you doing this Monday?

I don't know. I could **have a conference with colleagues**

3. When will you see your best friend again?

I don't know. I may not **see her soon**

4. What are you going to have for dinner?

I don't know. I might **have something spicy**

5. How are you going to get home this evening?

I'm not sure. I might **take a cab**

Exercise 3 Complete the sentence using the word in capitals.

take a cab , have a conference with colleagues , see her soon , go to Italy , have something spicy

1. Where are you going this summer?

I'm not sure. I may go to Italy

2. What are you doing this Monday?

I don't know. I could have a conference with colleagues

3. When will you see your best friend again?

I don't know. I may not see her soon

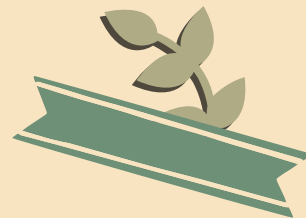
4. What are you going to have for dinner?

I don't know. I might have something spicy

5. How are you going to get home this evening?

I'm not sure. I might take a cab

PICK ONE



Put in 'must + infinitive' or 'must + have + past participle'

1) Keiko always does really well on exams. She ____ (study) a lot.

Must study

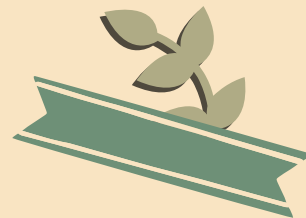
Must have studied

2) That woman drives a very expensive car. She ____ (have) a lot of money.

Must have

Must have had

PICK ONE



Put in 'must + infinitive' or 'must + have + past participle'

3) Where is my purse? I saw it earlier, so it ____ (be) in this room.

Must be

Must have been

4) When Lizzie got home yesterday there were flowers on the table. Her husband ____ (buy) them.

Must buy

Must have bought

PICK ONE



Put in 'must + infinitive' or 'must + have + past participle'

5) When Lucy got home, she found the ice cream had melted. It ___(be) too hot in the car.

Must have been

Must be

6) Oh no, I don't have my keys! I ___(leave) them in the taxi.

Must leave

Must have left