

Modals of Deduction Exercises

Level: B1

Use evidence to say how sure you are

Use *must* when the evidence makes something very likely, *might* when it is possible but uncertain, and *can't* when the evidence makes it impossible. For past deductions, add *have* + past participle.

Strong conclusion: *The lights are on. Someone must be home.* The evidence strongly supports this conclusion.

Possibility: *She might be at the library.* It is possible, but I do not know.

Impossible conclusion: *He can't be at work; he is sitting next to me.* The evidence rules it out.

Past deduction: *She must have missed the bus.* Use modal + *have* + past participle for a conclusion about the past.

Past possibility or impossibility: *They might have left early. He can't have seen us; he was away.* The certainty still comes from the evidence.

Exercise 1: Choose the strength of the deduction

Choose *must*, *might* or *can't* according to the evidence and certainty stated.

1. The café is full and every table is taken. It ___ be popular.
a) must b) might c) can't
2. I am not sure where Leo is. He ___ be at the gym.
a) must b) might c) can't
3. Sofia ___ be in Paris now. She is here in the room with us.
a) must b) might c) can't
4. The cake has disappeared and Max has chocolate on his face. He ___ eaten it.
a) must have b) might have c) can't have
5. Perhaps Nina ___ missed the email. I don't know yet.
a) must have b) might have c) can't have
6. Tom ___ seen the concert yesterday. He was in hospital the whole day and the event had no livestream.
a) must have b) might have c) can't have

Exercise 2: Complete the deduction

Use the modal named in the hint. Type all missing words, including *have* where needed.

7. There was a storm here last night, and the streets are wet. It ___ last night. (strong past conclusion: rain)
8. I'm not certain. The parcel ___ at the wrong address. (possible past event: arrive)

9. She ___ asleep now; I can hear her speaking on the phone. (impossible present conclusion: be)
10. I can see someone moving behind the office window. Someone ___ there. (strong present conclusion: be)
11. I am unsure. Ben ___ at home today. (present possibility: be)
12. She ___ the meeting yesterday; she was on a flight without internet throughout it. (impossible past event: attend)

Exercise 3: Fix the modal form

Replace the incorrect modal phrase with the correct one. Keep the rest of the sentence.

13. The lights are on. Someone must to be home.

14. I am not certain, but she might is at the station.

15. He can't to be at school; he is standing here.

16. The ground is wet. It must has rained last night.

17. Perhaps she might has left her bag on the train.

18. He can't have saw the film at the cinema last weekend; the cinema was closed all weekend.

Answer key

Exercise 1: Choose the strength of the deduction

1. a) must
2. b) might
3. c) can't
4. a) must have
5. b) might have
6. c) can't have

Exercise 2: Complete the deduction

7. must have rained
8. might have arrived
9. can't be / cannot be
10. must be
11. might be
12. can't have attended / cannot have attended

Exercise 3: Fix the modal form

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16. The ground is wet. It must have rained last night.
17. Perhaps she might have left her bag on the train.
18. He can't have seen the film at the cinema last weekend; the cinema was closed all weekend.