# Unit: Modals of Deduction and Speculation (He must be tired / She might have left)

## A

We use \*\*modals of deduction and speculation\*\* to say how sure we are about something or to guess what might be true.  
  
\*\*Present and general time:\*\*  
- must (certainty): He must be tired. (I’m sure he is tired.)  
- might / may / could (possibility): She might be at home.  
- can’t (impossibility): He can’t be at work. (I’m sure he is not at work.)  
  
\*\*Structure:\*\*  
modal + base form of the verb:  
- She must know the answer.  
- They might come later.

## B

\*\*Past deductions:\*\*  
We use these modals with \*\*have + past participle\*\* to talk about the past:  
- must have + past participle: He must have forgotten. (I’m sure he forgot.)  
- might / may / could have + past participle: She might have left early. (It’s possible.)  
- can’t have + past participle: They can’t have heard the news. (I’m sure they didn’t.)  
  
\*\*Examples:\*\*  
- He’s not here. He must have gone home.  
- The lights are off. They might have gone to bed.  
- She was with me, so she can’t have stolen it.

## C

\*\*Modals for deduction:\*\*  
These modals express different degrees of certainty:  
  
- must = 90–100% sure  
- might / may / could = 50% possible  
- can’t = 0% sure (impossible)  
  
\*\*Examples:\*\*  
- That must be her brother. (I’m almost sure.)  
- He might be busy. (It’s possible.)  
- She can’t be the teacher. (I’m sure she’s not.)

## D

\*\*Common mistakes:\*\*  
- Don’t use ‘must to’: ❌ She must to go home.  
✔ She must go home.  
  
- Remember the correct form for past: modal + have + past participle  
✔ They might have forgotten the meeting.  
✔ He can’t have seen us.

## E

Modals for advice and obligation ➜ Unit 31  
Modal verbs overview ➜ Appendix 2

# Exercises

## 1.1 Complete the sentences with must / might / can’t and the base verb:

1. She \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (be) tired. She’s been working all day.

2. That \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (be) true. It sounds unbelievable.

3. He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (be) at home — the lights are on.

4. They \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (know) the answer. They look confused.

5. You \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (be) right — I didn’t think of that!

## 1.2 Complete the sentences with a modal + have + past participle:

1. He isn’t here. He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (leave) already.

2. She \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (forget) the appointment. She never misses one.

3. They \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (not / hear) the announcement. It was very quiet.

4. I’m not sure, but she \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (take) the wrong bus.

5. He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (lose) his phone. He can’t find it anywhere.

## 1.3 Write your own sentences using modals of deduction and speculation:

1. Write a sentence using ‘must’ about a friend who is late.  
2. Write a sentence using ‘might’ about your teacher.  
3. Write a sentence using ‘can’t’ about something you’re sure didn’t happen.  
4. Write a past sentence using ‘might have’ about someone missing a call.  
5. Write a past sentence using ‘must have’ about a completed action.