# Mini-Lesson: Modals of Deduction and Speculation (B2 Level)

## Thinking Aloud: How to Explain This in Simple Words

We often guess about things — we don’t know for sure, but we have ideas. When we do this in English, we use modals of deduction like: must (strong certainty), might/may/could (possibility), can't/couldn't (impossibility).

These modals help us say how sure or unsure we are about something.

We use these modals:

- To talk about the present or future

- To speculate about the past

The main difference is what comes after the modal:

- Present/future: modal + base verb

- Past: modal + have + past participle

## Modals of Deduction – Present/Future

must = almost sure (positive): She must be tired — she worked all day.

might/may/could = maybe: He might be at home.

can't/couldn't = almost sure (negative): This can’t be true!

## Modals of Deduction – Past

must have = almost sure (positive): They must have left early.

might/may/could have = maybe: She might have forgotten the meeting.

can't/couldn't have = almost sure (negative): He can’t have known the truth.

Note: These are all about what we think happened, not facts.

## Example Sentences in Everyday Life

Present/Future:

- That must be her brother — they look so alike.

- He might be running late.

- This can’t be the right address — it’s a supermarket.

Past:

- You must have seen her — she was standing next to you.

- He might have taken the wrong train.

- They can’t have finished already — it’s too soon.

## Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Incorrect: She must goes to work. → Correct: She must go to work. → Tip: Use base verb after modal.

Incorrect: He must has forgotten. → Correct: He must have forgotten. → Tip: Use have + past participle for past.

Incorrect: It can’t be happened. → Correct: It can’t have happened. → Tip: Use correct structure.

Incorrect: They might went to the cinema. → Correct: They might have gone to the cinema. → Tip: Use have + past participle after might/may/could for past.

## Practice Activities

1. Choose the correct modal for each sentence (present or past):

a) This \_\_\_\_\_ be the right place. There’s the sign. (must / might / can’t)

b) He \_\_\_\_\_ have taken your phone by mistake. (must / might / can’t)

c) They \_\_\_\_\_ be home — the lights are off. (can’t / must / might)

d) She \_\_\_\_\_ have heard the news by now. (might / must / can’t)

e) That \_\_\_\_\_ be true! It’s impossible! (must / might / can’t)

2. Complete the sentences with a modal of deduction:

a) You look pale. You \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (must / be / sick).

b) He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (can’t / be / at work). It’s Sunday!

c) They \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (might / have / forget) the meeting.

d) I’m not sure, but she \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (could / be) in her office.

e) They \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (must / have / win) — everyone is cheering!

3. Correct the Errors:

a) He must to go home.

b) She can’t has known the answer.

c) They might forgot the address.

d) You must be went to the party.

e) He must have sees it.