

%Lingoda

GRAMMAR

Past modals of deduction

LEVEL

Upper-Intermediate (B2)

NUMBER

EN_B2_1102G

LANGUAGE

English



Learning outcomes

 I can identify the past modals of deduction and explain their uses.

 I can speculate about actions in the past using a range of modals of deduction.





Past modals of deduction

We can use **modal verbs** to make **deductions** about actions or happenings in the past.

We can also call them modals of past probability.



A tsunami? Gosh, that **must have been** terrifying!

Deduction = using the available information to make a guess or draw a conclusion.



9.

Must have

We use must have + past participle when we feel certain about what happened.

Situation	Expression	
I arrive at my friend John's house. He doesn't answer the door when I ring the bell and his car is gone.	"Oh, he must have gone out!" (=this is the only explanation I can think of)	
I send a present to a friend in Canada. It doesn't arrive after 6 weeks.	"It must have got lost in the post!"	



Can't or couldn't have

- We use can't have + past participle when we feel something wasn't possible.
- We use couldn't have + past participle in the same way.

Situation	Expression	
I'm at the office and need to talk to my colleague Sue. I can't find her, but I see her handbag is still on her desk.	"She can't have left the office yet!"	
I go on holiday and miss a friend's party. Another friend later says they saw me at the party.	"It couldn't have been me! I was in Spain that weekend."	





Match the sentence with the next one

1	That jacket you bought looks very high
•	quality.

a He must have gone away.

2 Sarah was in a tricky situation when she lost her job.

b It can't have been easy for her.

I haven't seen my neighbour for a few days.

It must have been very expensive.

4 I've lost my watch.

d He couldn't have crashed his car.

Tim is an extremely careful driver.

I must have dropped it somewhere.





Complete with *must have* or *can't have*



Do the activity on your own. Then, **compare** answers in **breakout rooms**.

1	I haven't seen Antonio working at the bar in ages. He (change) jobs.	>	He must have changed jobs.
2	I had lunch with Tracey on Saturday afternoon, so she (<i>be</i>) with you!	>	
3	I can't find my phone. I (<i>leave</i>) it at home.	>	
4	Tina looks very tired. She (<i>sleep</i>) very well last night.	>	
5	You (walk) that entire distance. It's so far!	>	
6	I love your new dress! It (be) so expensive.	>	

Might or may have

- We use might have or may have + past participle when we think it's possible that something happened.
- The negative forms are might not have or may not have.

Situation	Expression	
I'm at the office and need to talk to my colleague Sue. I can't find her, but I see her laptop is still on her desk.	She might have gone out to buy a coffee.	
Yesterday, I called my friend Mohammed, but he didn't answer his phone.	He may have been asleep.	





Could have

We also use could have + past participle to mean something was possible.

Situation	Expression		
I'm at the office and need to talk to my colleague Sue. I can't find her but I see her laptop is still on her desk.	She could have gone out to buy a coffee.		
Yesterday, I called my friend Mohammed, but he didn't answer his phone.	He could have been asleep.		





What might have happened?

She might have fallen off her bike You see your friend with a broken arm. again! Your colleague seemed stressed this morning. Two of your friends end their relationship. Your car has a flat tyre and a broken window. Your phone suddenly stops working. Your neighbour is no longer friendly to you.



Couldn't have vs might or may not have

- Be careful though!
- Couldn't have does not mean the same as might or may not have.

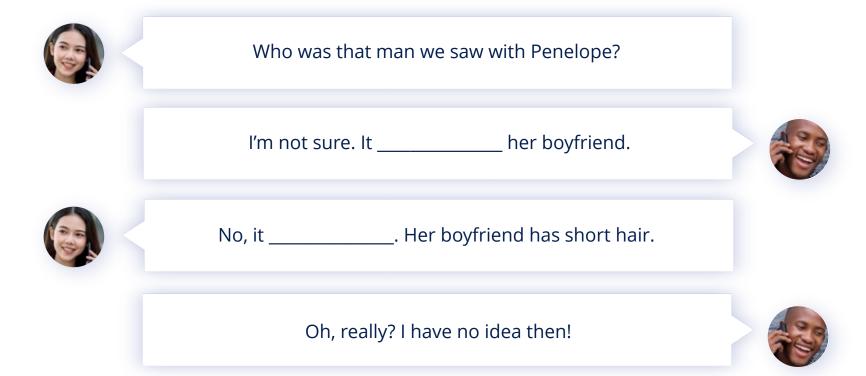
Sentence	Meaning	
I couldn't have been at the office that day.	It's not possible that I was at the office.	
I might not have been at the office that day.	Perhaps I was at the office, perhaps I wasn't.	





Fill in the gaps

Use *might have been* or *couldn't have been*. **Explain** your choice.





9.

Choose the correct option

1	He misunderstood my di	misunderstood my directions. Why else would he be late?		
	a. must have	b. can't have		
2	2 She gone to the beach. She hates sand!			
	a. might have	b. can't have		
3	3 Iwritten the number down incorrectly. That number doesn't exist.			
	a. must have	b. may have		



9.

Choose the correct option

4	They	been at the restaurant yesterday, but I didn't see them.	
	a. must have	b. may have	
5	John	_ been so happy when he bought his first car. He's always wanted one!	
	a. may have	b. must have	
6	- Where's Jill? - She gone into town. Are her car keys still there?		
	a. might have	b. can't have	





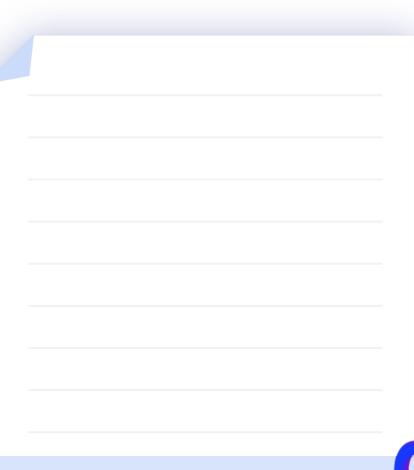
Write a text

Aim to write 40-50 words.

- Choose one of the situations from slide 10.
- Write a text to a friend telling them what you think has happened.







Let's reflect

 Can you identify the past modals of deduction and explain their uses?

 Can you speculate about actions in the past using a range of modals of deduction?

Your teacher will now make one suggestion for improvement for each student.



End of the lesson

Idiom

to bet your bottom dollar

Meaning: to say you are certain about something

Example: You can **bet your bottom dollar** it was Jack who arrived last.







Additional practice



Underline the correct option



- 1 Tom didn't come to the party on Saturday, so he *must / can't* have been busy that day.
- **2** Leanne can't find her glasses. She *might / couldn't* have left them at the restaurant.
- 3 Alisha missed her train this morning. She can't / must have got to work on time this morning.
- 4 Pamela is really smart. She *must / might* have passed all her exams with top marks.
- **5** Leicester Square is down there. We *can't / may* have passed it already!





Fill in the gaps



1	Nobody knows wh	he died. We think it	been an accident.
	Trobody Kilovis Wil	ric aica. We diffine to	been an accident.

a. can't have

- b. may have
- Will didn't eat any of the food we prepared. He ______ liked it!
 - a. might have

- b. might not have
- 3 Sarah looked so happy yesterday. She ______ finally passed her driving test!
 - a. must have

b. can't have





Write a past modal of deduction



Use *must have, might / may have, could have or can't have.*

The streets are wet this morning.

My friend Ben hasn't arrived yet.

Dianne looked very ill at work today.

My computer isn't booting up.



Answer key

- **P. 6:** 1. c, 2. b, 3. a, 4. e, 5. d
- P. 7: 2. She can't have been
 - 3. I must have left
 - 4. She can't have slept
 - 5. You can't have walked
 - 6. It must have been
- **P. 12:** 1. Might have been
 - 2. Couldn't have been.
- **P. 13-14:** 1. a, 2. b, 3. a, 4. b, 5. b, 6. a
- **P. 19:** 1. must
 - 2. might
 - 3. can't
 - 4. must
 - 5. can't
- **P.20:** 1. b, 2. b, 3. a



9.

Summary

Past modals of deduction

- We can use modal verbs to make deductions about actions or happenings in the past.
- A deduction involves using the available information to make a guess or draw a conclusion.
- A tsunami? Gosh, that must have been terrifying!

Must have and can't/couldn't have

- Must have + past participle means we feel certain about what happened: He must have gone out!
- Can't/couldn't have + past participle means something wasn't possible: It couldn't have been me!

Might/may/could have

- Might/may have + past participle means it's possible it happened: She may have gone out!.
- Could have + past participle also means something was possible: She could have gone out!

Might/may not have vs couldn't have

- Be careful! *Might/may not have* + past participle means **perhaps.**: / *might not have* known him!
- Whereas couldn't have + past participle means it wasn't possible.: I couldn't have known him!





Vocabulary

deduction

tricky

ages

entire

flat tyre





Notes

