

# Advanced uses of *may* and *might*

GRAMMAR

LEVEL  
Intermediate

NUMBER  
EN\_BE\_3A15G

LANGUAGE  
English

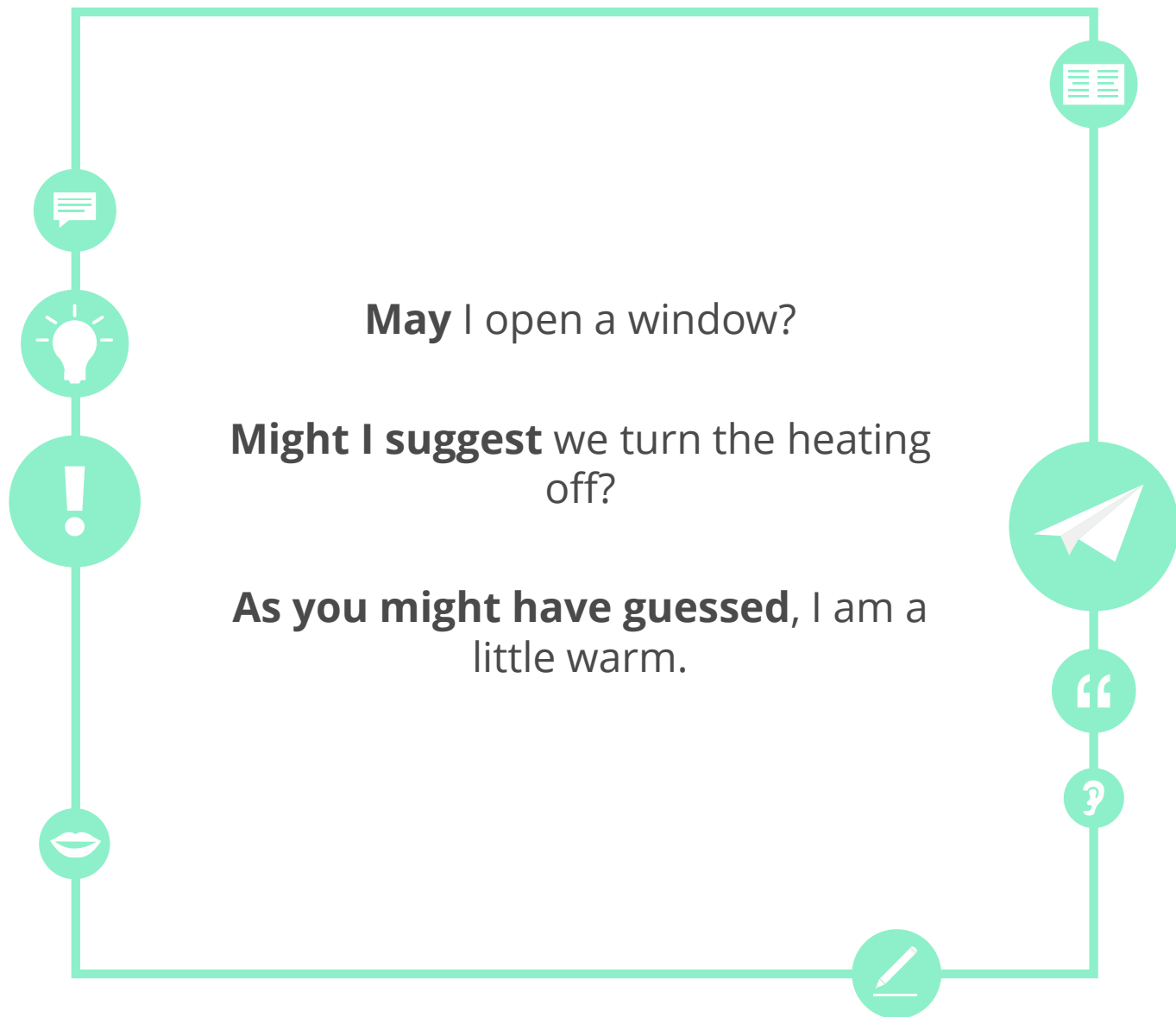




## Goals

- Can use 'may' and 'might' to ask for and give permission and to make polite requests.
- Can use 'may' and 'might' to focus on information and to express an opinion.







## Preview

- In this lesson, you will learn how and when to use *may* and *might* in various contexts.



**As you may know**, students are a very important demographic for us.



## Recap: *may* and *might* to ask for permission

- **May** and **might** can both be used when **asking for permission**.
- **May** is used to make **polite** requests, and used more commonly.
- **Might** is used to make **very polite** requests.

May	Might
May I borrow your laptop for this afternoon?	Might I ask you a question?
May we come a bit later?	Might we just interrupt for a moment?



## Recap: *may* and *might* to ask for permission

- Here are some more examples:



**May** I come in?

**Might** I book a table for later tonight?





## Recap: *may* to give permission



- We **do not** use **might** to give permission.
- We only use **may**.
- **May** is quite **formal**. We often use **can** in **less formal** situations.



Yes, you **may** come in.

Yes, you **may** book a table for after 8pm.





## Asking for and giving permission

Look at the questions below. Who would you ask each one to?  
Why would you choose one over another?



May I borrow your pen?

Might I borrow your pen?

Can I borrow your pen?





## Using *may*

Use the verbs in the boxes to make polite requests related to each picture.

go



leave

dance



look



## **Might** to make very polite requests

- As you know, we use **might** to make **very polite requests**.
- We often use **might** before main verbs like *ask*, *suggest*, *recommend* and *propose*.



**Might** I ask how you heard about our company?

**Might** I recommend the grilled salmon?





## Matching activity

Read the sentences carefully and match them with the correct meanings.

polite request

very polite request

something possible  
happened

not sure about  
something

1. Might I have a word in private?
2. I may see you at the weekend.
3. They may have forgotten all about it.
4. May I have your attention please?





## May vs might

	MAY	MIGHT
1. I was just wondering whether you _____ be able to help me out with this presentation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. _____ the new year bring you lots of happiness!	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I told them I _____ go if I felt like it, but wasn't sure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. You _____ try asking her for help – she knows her stuff.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. It _____ be a risky decision, but it will improve sales performance in the long-term	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. My boss said I _____ leave once I've finished this task.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## Use *might* to change these sentences into very polite requests

1. I think you should have the grilled salmon.



**Might** I recommend the grilled salmon?

2. We should park nearer the airport.



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. We need to reschedule our meeting.



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. We have to consider other options.



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. We can upgrade you to business class.



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## Find the mistakes and correct the sentences

1. May you please sign the contract and return it to us by next week?



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2. Might you speak Polish?



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3. You may at least come with us and meet our new client, don't you think?



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4. Nowadays, people could travel very easily all over Europe.



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5. Might you please let me know your answer by the end of the week?



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6. Employees might bring their dogs to work.



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7. You might come in and speak with me, but only for 10 minutes. I am busy.



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8. In that country, citizens could not make suggestions openly.



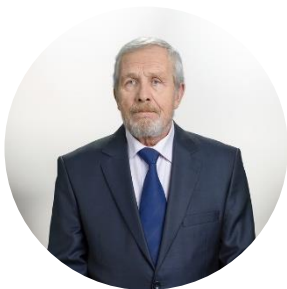
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## *As you may know*

- We use the phrase *as you may know* to **focus attention** on something we are saying.
- This forms a **dependent clause** that can come **before** or **after** the **main clause**.
- *As you may know* also acknowledges that the people we are talking to might have **some awareness** of what we are talking about.



**As you may know,** I am retiring at the end of the month.

We have had a difficult year financially,  
**as you may already know.**





## *As you may have heard*

- *As you may have heard* is another way of **focussing on something**.
- We use it in the same way as ***as you may know***.
- With these two phrases, the implication is that what we are talking about is **shared knowledge**.



**As you may have heard**, we are looking to hire two new managers.

Hank is currently flying to Dortmund,  
**as you may have heard.**







## *As I may have mentioned*

- We use *as I may have mentioned* in a similar way.
- This phrase assumes that **the topic is known** to whoever the speaker is addressing.
- You can form variations on these phrases: *may* + *have* + **past participle** (*seen, discovered, found, remembered* etc.)



**As I may have mentioned,** Maurice is on holiday until Friday.

I am joining the HR team, **as Emily may have already mentioned.**





## Choose the correct verb to fill the gap in each sentence

1. As I may have \_\_\_\_\_, I went to Italy on holiday last year.

a. heard

b. mentioned

c. known

d. know

2. Juliette is applying for redundancy, as you may \_\_\_\_\_.

a. might

b. mentioned

c. heard

d. know

3. As you may have \_\_\_\_\_, we will open two new stores next year.

a. know

b. heard

c. mentioned

d. hear

4. As you may have \_\_\_\_\_ in the film, we have changed our company branding.

a. forgotten

b. mentioned

c. heard

d. seen



## Using *may* to focus on a topic

Use phrases with *may* to form dependent clauses before or after talking about the topics in each of the boxes.

Example: As you may have remembered, today is Isaac's birthday.

You are talking to your colleagues about something you did at the weekend



You are talking to your manager about wanting some time off work



You are talking to your energy company about wanting to change providers

You are explaining a job role to a candidate during an interview



You are talking to an interviewer about your work experience





## *May as well and might as well*

- Subject + *might/may as well* + bare infinitive.
- We use it to mean there is **nothing better to do** or there is **no harm** in doing something.
- We can use either *may* or *might*.



This discussion is pointless. We **may as well go** home.

We **might as well try** calling Jean-Baptiste to see if he is free.





## *May* and *might* to express an opinion

- *This/it* + *may/might* + bare infinitive + object + infinitive.
- *This/it* + *may/might* + bare infinitive + object, + conjunction + main clause.
- We can only use verbs that take an object as a complement with this structure.
- Common verbs are *surprise*, *shock*, *impress*, *confuse*, *thrill*, *please* and *excite*.



**It may please you to know** that your application was successful.

**This might surprise you, but** Gillian has decided to leave the company.





## *May* and *might* to express an opinion

- *Subject + may/might + be/sensory verb + adjective.*



I have something to tell you. **It may be rather upsetting** for you to hear.

**This might seem risky**, but I want you to trust me.





## Finish the sentences

1. You may not agree with me,  
but...



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2. This may impress you, but...



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3. It may be a high-paying job,  
but...



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4. She may have a prosperous  
business but...



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5. I may seem like I'm enjoying it,  
but...

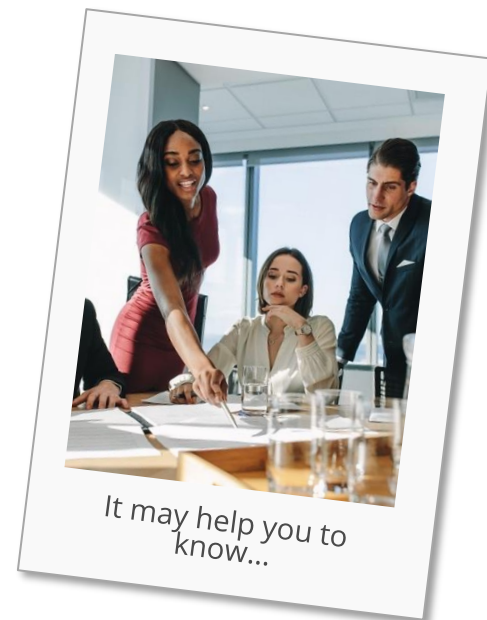


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Use the phrases from the lesson to express the topics in each of the boxes







## New regulations in the office

You have been asked to write an email to everyone on staff to tell them about new working conditions in the office.

Discuss what you might include in this email.





## Reflect on the goals

Go back to the second slide of the lesson and check if you have achieved all the goals of the lesson.

yes

no





## Reflect on this lesson

Think about everything you have seen in this lesson.  
What were the most difficult activities or words? The easiest?



If you have time, go over  
the most difficult slides again



## Answer key 1/2

### Exercise p. 9 – possible answers

1. May I go to the bathroom?
2. May I leave the office for a little while?
3. May I have this dance?
4. May I look at this over the weekend?

### Exercise p. 11

1. Very polite request, 2. not sure about something, 3. something possible happened, 4. polite request

### Exercise p. 12

1. might, 2. may, 3. might, 4. might, 5. may, 6. may

### Exercise p. 13 – possible answers

2. **Might I suggest** we park nearer the airport?
3. **Might** we need to reschedule our meeting?
4. **Might I propose that** we consider other options?
5. **Might I suggest** that we upgrade you to business class?



## Answer key 2/2

### Exercise p. 18

- 1. b
- 2. d
- 3. b
- 4. d

### Exercise p. 14

1. May → could/can, 2. might → can, 3. may → could, 4. could → can/may, 5. might → could, 6. might → may, 7. might → may, 8. could → can/may







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