

LEVEL
Intermediate

**NUMBER
EN BE 3413X**

LANGUAGE
English

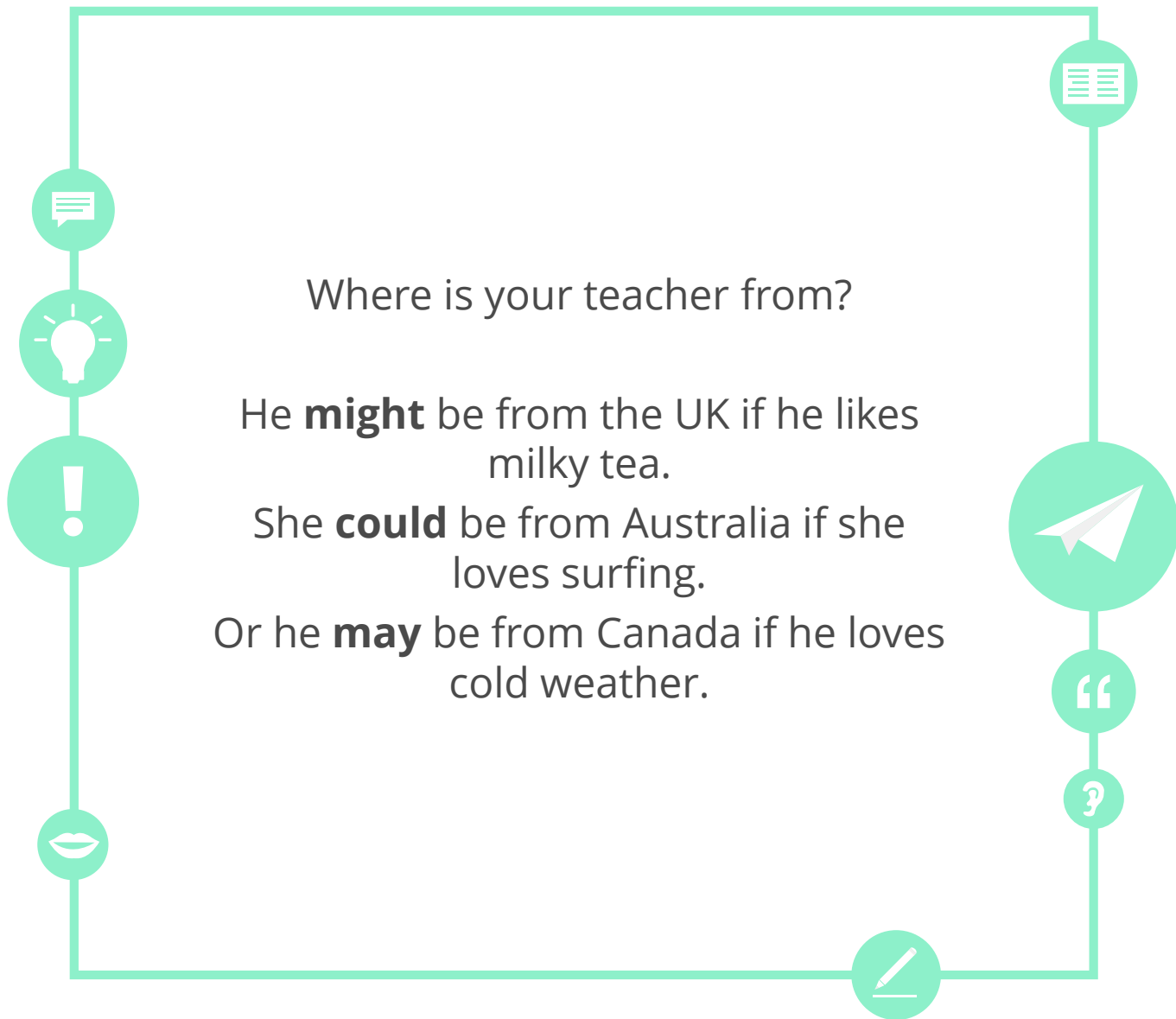




Goals

- Can use common expressions to express the possibility of doing something.
- Can form questions in order to enquire about the possibility of something.







Preview and warm-up

In this lesson you are going to learn about different ways to talk about **possibility** using **modal verbs** and other **expressions**.



I think we **might** learn something useful today.



Possibility in the present

- **Must + infinitive** and **can't + infinitive** both express **certainty** in the **present**.
 - We use **must** when we are **sure something is true**.
 - We use **can't** when we are **sure something is not true**.

Positive	Negative
John is very late. He must be lost.	John can't be lost. He's been here so many times.
That must be Kara. She said she'd call.	That can't be Kara. She's abroad right now.
Alice is very smart. She must know how to figure this out.	Alice only just started working here a few days ago. She can't know the answer.



Possibility in the present

- *Could, might, and may* all mean **maybe**. We use them when we are **not sure** about something.
- To talk about the **present** we use *could* + **infinitive**.

John **could** be lost. He's only been to this branch once.

That **might** be Kara. She calls sometimes on Wednesdays.

Alice studied finance. She **may** know the answer.

Don't rush into the deal. It **could** damage our company.





Can



- We **do not** use *can* to express **possibility**.
- Can you see what is wrong in the box below? Which verbs should we use instead?



Erik **can** be lost. He's only been here once.



Fill in the gaps

**Fill in the gaps with the words below.
Remember that some of the words mean the same thing.**

must

can't

may

could

might

1. That _____ be Claire on the phone. Her phone is broken.
2. It _____ be the delivery man at the door. We ordered some pizza for the company get-together.
3. Valerie _____ be so worried about her son – he's been ill for months.
4. Tom _____ be in a meeting right now. Or perhaps on his lunch break. I'm not sure.
5. I'm not sure, but Greg _____ be working tonight.





What's happening?

**Make guesses about what is happening in each of these situations.
The first one is done for you as an example.**

1. Jenny is smiling. She *must be feeling happy*.
2. Dan is crying. He...
3. Oliver looks confused. He...
4. Bertha has her hands over her mouth. She...
5. Anne has her eyes closed. She...



Working there

Think about what it would be like to work in these jobs.
Make some guesses about the day-to-day tasks of the employees and
how they might feel.

It must be...



Factory worker



Developer

The people
can't be...

It may...



Accountant



Judge

It might be...



Possibility in the past

To express **certainty in the past** we use ***must have* + past participle** or ***can't have* + past participle**.

Gloria hasn't been at work recently. She must have left the company.	Her things are still on her desk. She can't have left the company.
I saw Greg with a tall, dark-haired woman today. It must have been his wife.	Greg's wife is on holiday. It can't have been her.
Delia wasn't at work yesterday. She must have been ill.	Delia was at the theatre last night so she can't have been ill.



Possibility in the past

- To express possibility in the past, we can use:
 - **could, might** and **may** + **perfect infinitive** (i.e. *have* + past participle)
- If we want to express a continuous action, we can use:
 - **could, might** and **may** + **present perfect continuous** (i.e. *have* + *been* + *-ing* form)

	<i>could</i>	<i>might</i>	<i>may</i>
perfect infinitive	Why wasn't Lucy at the meeting? She could have been ill.	Why didn't Jane come to the party? She might have been busy.	Who was standing over there? It may have been Ben.
present perfect continuous	Why didn't Ron answer the door? He could have been sleeping .	Why was Anna jumping? She might have been exercising .	Why was Luke running? He may have been chasing the bus.



Make a sentence with a past modal to express possibility.

1. Where did they go on holiday?

→ They might have gone to Spain.

2. Why was Jean late today?

→ _____

3. Who broke the plate yesterday?

→ _____

4. Jack cycled to work instead of driving today.

→ _____

5. Tina looked pale.

→ _____



Daily lives

Think about the daily life of your grandparents' generation.
What must have been different for them? What might they have done?



laundry

travelling

entertainment

shopping



Possibility in the past

Speculate about the causes of the following situations with your own ideas in the past.

Why did your co-worker spontaneously quit her job?

She must have found a better job elsewhere.

Why are sales at your company decreasing?

Why are so many customers complaining about your latest product?

Why did Ella not show up to the meeting at which she was supposed to present?



Adjectives for possibility

- There are certain **adjectives** we can add to sentences to express **possibility**.
- These adjectives are *sure*, *possible*, *probable*, and *certain*.
- Look at how they are used in **positive** and **negative** forms.

Positive certainty	Maybe	Negative certainty
I'm sure she has left.	I'm not sure if she has left.	I'm sure she hasn't left.
	It is possible she has left.	It is impossible she has left.
	It's probable that she's left.	
I'm certain she has left.	I'm uncertain if she's left.	I'm certain she hasn't left.



Adverbs for possibility

- There are certain **adverbs** we can add to sentences to express **possibility**.
- These adverbs are ***surely, probably, certainly***.
- *We can also use the adjective – **likely***.
- Look at how they are used in **positive** and **negative** forms.

Positive certainty	Maybe	Negative
Surely she's left.		Surely she hasn't left.
	It is likely that she has left.	It is unlikely she has left.
	She has probably left.	She probably hasn't left.
She's certainly left.		She certainly hasn't left.



Expressions for possibility

- Here are some **expressions** we can use to express **possibility**.
- Look at how they are used **in context**.

Is Alex coming?	I suppose so. He said he was.
Where's Jane?	There's a chance she got caught in traffic.
How likely is it that Ted will be late?	Very! He's always late.
What are the odds that the train will be delayed?	Very low. The trains are never late in Japan.
Are you going to the business lunch tomorrow?	Perhaps . I'll see how I feel.



Nouns for possibility

- Below are some **nouns** we can use to express **possibility**.
- Look at them **in context**.

Positive	Negative
There is a high likelihood that I will get a promotion.	There is no likelihood that I will get a promotion – I'm late for work every day.
There's a good chance Betty will get fired.	There's no chance Betty will get fired. It's just a minor mistake.
There is a high probability that artificial intelligence will drive customer experience in the future.	There is a low probability that unemployment rates will improve within the next two years.



Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with the words on the right.

1. I'm _____ that this new strategy will really deliver.
2. It is _____ that oil prices will soar over the next few years.
3. There is no _____ he will win the election.
4. Staff turnover will _____ rise over the next several months if employees continue to be overworked.
5. _____ that you will be transferred to the China office next year?

likely

probably

sure

What are the odds

chance



Unscramble the questions and then answer them

A

of a woman

becoming

the likelihood

president of

What is

your country?

B

CEO of a

that you

How likely

is it

large company?

will become



Very likely!



Speaking

Answer the questions about your future.



1

What are the chances that you will live abroad at some point during your life?

2

What is the probability that you will work in an international company?

3

How likely is it that you will learn another language after English?



What's their job?

- Guess what each of these people does for a living.
- Say how likely it is that you would undertake one of these careers.





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

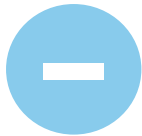
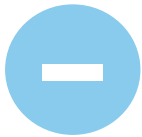
no





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

Exercise p. 8

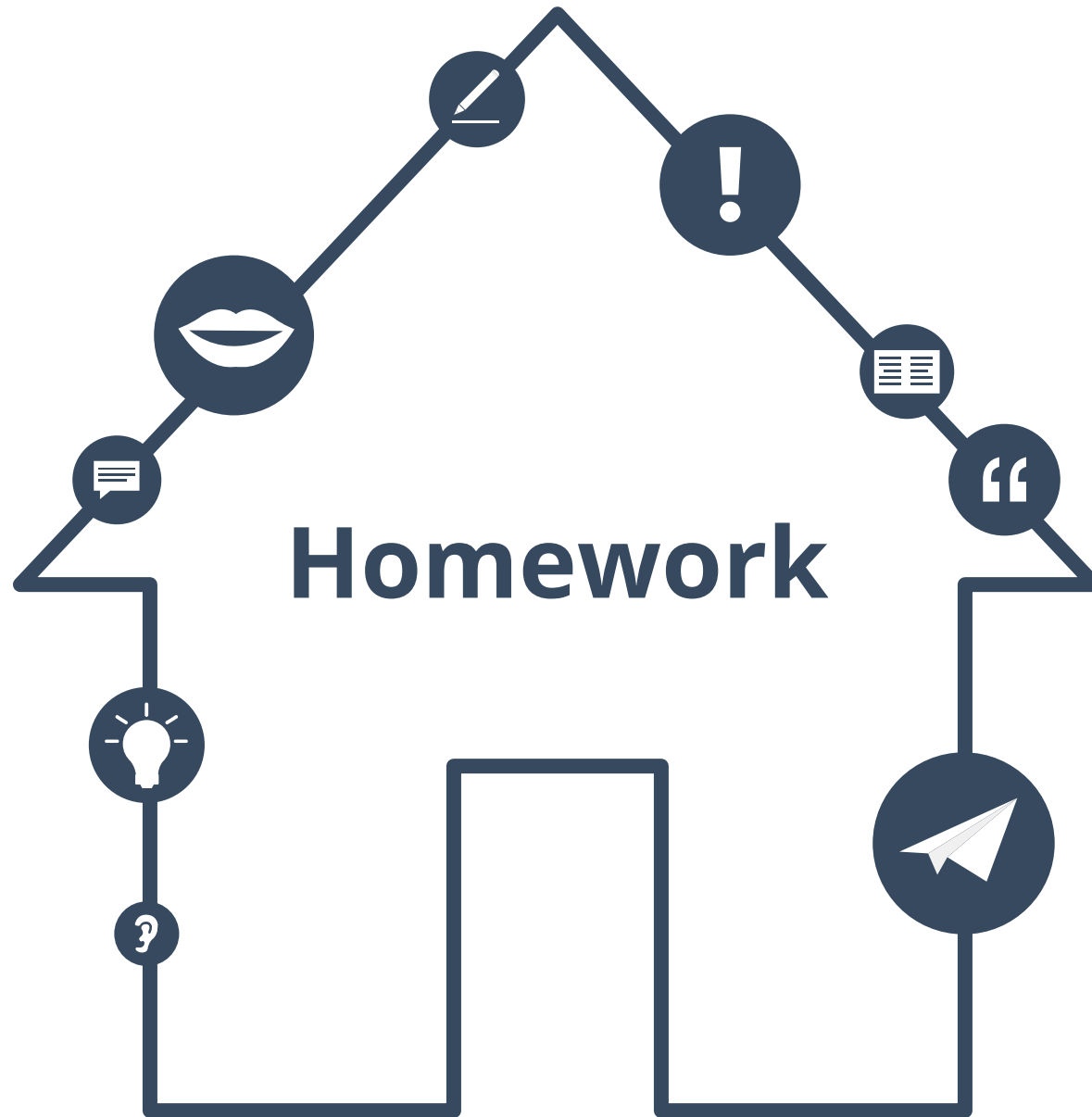
1. can't, 2. may/might/could, 3. must, 4. may/might/could, 5. may/might/could

Exercise p. 20

1. sure, 2. likely, 3. chance, 4. probably, 5. what are the odds

Exercise p. 21

A. What is the likelihood of a woman becoming president of your country?
B. How likely is it that you will become CEO of a large company?





What did she do?

Make some guesses about the lifestyle of the man in the picture.





Writing

What was your dream as a child? Did you want to be an astronaut or a great philosopher? What is the likelihood of you still pursuing your dream? Write a text below answering these questions, bearing in mind what you have learnt in today's lesson.

○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	
○	



About this material

Find out more at
www.lingoda.com

This material is provided by

lingoda



lingoda Who are we?



Why learn English online?



What kinds of English classes do we offer?



Who are our English teachers?



How do our English certificates work?



We also have a language blog!