

# Modal Verbs – Key

## 1 Complete B's sentences using *can / could / might / must / should / would* + the verb in brackets.

In some sentences you need to use *have: must have... / should have... etc.* In some sentences you need the negative (*can't / couldn't etc.*).

- 1 A: I'm hungry.  
B: But you've just had lunch. You **can't be** hungry already. (be)
- 2 A: I haven't seen our neighbours for ages.  
B: No. They **must have gone** away. (go)
- 3 A: What's the weather like? Is it raining?  
B: Not at the moment but it **could rain/might rain** later. (rain)
- 4 A: Where has Julia gone?  
B: I'm not sure. She **might have gone/could have gone** to the bank. (go)
- 5 A: I didn't see you at John's party last week.  
B: No, I had to work that evening, so I **couldn't go** (go).
- 6 A: I saw you at John's party last week.  
B: No, you didn't. You **couldn't have seen/can't have seen** me. I didn't go to John's party. (see)
- 7 A: When did you post the letter to Mary?  
B: This morning. So she **should get** it tomorrow. (get)

## 2 Each of these sentences contains at least one error. Underline the errors and correct them.

- 1 May (**CAN**) you tell me where I may (**CAN/COULD**) catch a bus into town?
- 2 I checked the timetable so I mustn't (**CAN'T**) be wrong about the departure time.
- 3 You needn't to (**DON'T NEED TO/ NEEDN'T**) worry if I miss the last bus because I can get a taxi.
- 4 Do I ought to (**SHOULD I**) phone for a taxi, or may (**CAN**) I pick one up in the street?
- 5 I could get a taxi but I must waiting (**WOULD HAVE TO WAIT**) for five minutes for one to arrive.
- 6 Don't be silly, you ought not to (**DON'T NEED TO/ NEEDN'T**) show your passport if you will (**WANT TO**) buy a rail ticket!
- 7 You mustn't (**DON'T HAVE TO/ NEEDN'T**) write anything down unless you want to.
- 8 You need (**OUGHT TO/ SHOULD/ NEED TO**) spend as much time as you can on your homework.

## 3 Rewrite each sentence without changing the meaning, beginning with the words given, and using *must, can, might, may, could* where necessary.

- 1 He can't have told her the truth. I don't think **he told her the truth**.
- 2 I'm sure you were a beautiful baby! You **must have been a beautiful boy**.
- 3 I wish you had bought an ice cream for me! You **could/might have bought me an ice cream**.
- 4 She may have taken your umbrella by mistake. Perhaps **she took your umbrella by mistake**.
- 5 He won the prize? That's impossible! He **can't have won the prize**.
- 6 Perhaps you dropped your wallet on the stairs. You **could/may/might have dropped your wallet on the stairs**.
- 7 It's very unlikely that she agreed to that. She **can't/couldn't have agreed to that**.

## 4 Make sentences from the words in brackets.

- 1 Don't phone Ann now. (she might / have / lunch)  
**She might be having lunch.**
- 2 I ate too much. Now I feel sick. (I shouldn't / eat / so much)  
**I shouldn't have eaten so much.**
- 3 I wonder why Tom didn't phone me. (he must / forget)  
**He must have forgotten.**
- 4 Why did you go home so early? (you needn't / go / home so early)  
**You needn't have gone home so early.**

- 5 You've signed the contract. (it / can't / change / now)  
**It can't be changed now.**
- 6 'What's Linda doing?' 'I'm not sure.' (she may / watch / television)  
**She may be watching television.**
- 7 Ann was standing outside the cinema. (she must / wait / for somebody)  
**She must have been waiting for somebody.**
- 8 He was in prison at the time that the crime was committed, so (he couldn't / do / it).  
**He couldn't have done it.**
- 9 Why weren't you here earlier? (you ought / be / here, earlier)  
**You ought to have been here earlier.**
- 10 Why didn't you ask me to help you? (I would / help / you)  
**I would have helped you.**
- 11 I'm surprised nobody told you that the road was very dangerous. (you should / warn)  
**You should have been warned.**
- 12 George was in a strange mood yesterday. (he might not / feel / very well)  
**He might not have been feeling very well./He might not have felt very well.**

**5 Rewrite each sentence using the word given in brackets.**

- 1 I don't think we left the keys at home. (can't)  
**We can't have left the keys at home.**
- 2 Perhaps they sold their house. (might)  
**They might have sold their house.**
- 3 Perhaps she caught a later train. (may)  
**She may have caught a later train.**
- 4 I suppose it's possible that he took the wrong turning. (could)  
**He could have taken a wrong turning.**
- 5 I reckon he stole it. (must)  
**He must have stolen it.**
- 6 Perhaps she has told him by now. (may)  
**She may have told him by now.**
- 7 Knowing him, he probably broke it. (bound to)  
**He is bound to have broken it.**
- 8 It was possible for it to explode. (could)  
**It could have exploded.**
- 9 Why didn't you invite me to your party! (might)  
**You might have invited me to your party!**
- 10 I don't think he was a very good driver, in that case. (couldn't)  
**He couldn't have been a very good driver.**
- 11 I'm fairly sure that they threw it away. (must)  
**They must have thrown it away.**
- 12 It's possible they had already done it. (may)  
**They may have already done it.**
- 13 You were lucky they didn't kill you! (might)  
**They might have killed you./You might have been killed.**
- 14 Perhaps she didn't know about it. (may not)  
**She may not have known about it.**
- 15 I think he was drunk. (must)  
**He must have been drunk.**

**6 Put each sentence into the Past.**

- 1 Sorry, but I have to leave early.  
**I had to leave early.**
- 2 But I'm sure you must know the answer.  
**You must have known the answer.**
- 3 I think you should tell him the answer.  
**You should have told him the answer.**
- 4 You need to leave me the keys.  
**You needed to leave me the keys.**
- 5 He's got to come here at once.  
**He had to come here at once.**
- 6 You shouldn't be so impatient.  
**You shouldn't have been so impatient.**
- 7 He must be her new boyfriend.

- He must have been her new boyfriend.**
- 8 She ought to see him immediately.  
**She ought to have seen him immediately.**
- 9 He must not let the dog into his bedroom!  
**He shouldn't have let the dog into his bedroom!**
- 10 You might try to be a little more friendly!  
**You might have tried to be a little more friendly!**
- 7 Some modal verbs have different implications, especially when referring to past events. Match the sentences on the left to the implied meanings on the right (in italics).**
- |                                                 |                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| 1 I should have given her my phone number.      | <b>I didn't give her the number.</b>            |
| 2 I had to give her my phone number.            | <b>I gave her the number.</b>                   |
| 3 I didn't have to give her my phone number.    | <b>I didn't give her the number.</b>            |
| 4 She wouldn't let me give her my phone number. | <b>I didn't give her the number.</b>            |
| a He can't have gone to hospital.               | <b>I'm sure he didn't go.</b>                   |
| b He couldn't go to hospital.                   | <b>He didn't go, because he wasn't able to.</b> |
| c He must have gone to hospital.                | <b>I'm convinced he has gone.</b>               |
| d He needn't have gone to hospital.             | <b>He went, but it was unnecessary to.</b>      |
| e He shouldn't have gone to hospital.           | <b>He went, but it was a mistake to do so.</b>  |
- 8 Match the sentences on the left to the ones on the right closest in meaning.**
- |                                                     |                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| 1 I can't help you to find accommodation. –         | <b>I am unable to help you.</b>                |
| 2 I don't have to help you to find accommodation. – | <b>It's not my responsibility to help you.</b> |
| 3 I won't help you to find accommodation. –         | <b>I'm unwilling to help you.</b>              |
| a She can't be joking. –                            | <b>I'm sure she isn't.</b>                     |
| b She can't tell jokes. –                           | <b>She's no good at it.</b>                    |
| c She must be joking. –                             | <b>I'm sure she is.</b>                        |
| d She mustn't tell jokes. –                         | <b>She isn't allowed to.</b>                   |
| i You can't leave now. –                            | <b>I won't let you go.</b>                     |
| ii You could leave now. –                           | <b>It would be possible to go.</b>             |
| iii You don't have to leave now. –                  | <b>It's unnecessary to go.</b>                 |
| iv You needn't leave now. –                         | <b>It's unnecessary to go.</b>                 |
| v You shouldn't leave now. –                        | <b>It's not a good idea to go.</b>             |