

Modal Verbs of Deduction

B2-C1 Practice Worksheet | must, might, may, could and can't

Name: _____ Date: _____

Aim: Practise using modal verbs of deduction to express certainty, possibility and impossibility in the present and the past.

Quick Grammar Reference

Use this table before you start. It summarises the most important meanings and structures.

| Meaning | Present structure | Past structure | Example |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|--|--|
| Almost certain it is true | must + infinitive | must have + past participle | She must be tired. / She must have left. |
| Possible | may/might/could + infinitive | may/might/could have + past participle | He might know. / He might have forgotten. |
| Almost certain it is not true | can't + infinitive | can't have + past participle | It can't be true. / He can't have seen us. |
| Happening now | modal + be + -ing | modal + have been + -ing | They must be working. / They must have been waiting. |

Exercise 1: How Certain Is the Speaker?

Read each sentence and write A, B or C. A = almost certain it is true; B = possible; C = almost certain it is not true.

1. She must be at home. Her coat is hanging in the hall. _____
2. He might be in a meeting. He usually turns his phone off then. _____
3. That can't be Elena. Elena is much taller. _____
4. They could be waiting outside the cinema. _____
5. The kitchen smells wonderful. Dad must be cooking. _____
6. This can't be the right bus. It is going in the opposite direction. _____
7. He may know the answer, but I am not sure. _____
8. You must be exhausted after such a long journey. _____
9. She can't have finished the report already. She only started it this morning. _____
10. They might have missed the train. _____

Exercise 2: Present Deduction - Complete the Sentences

Complete the sentences with must, might, may, could or can't and the correct verb from the box.

be know live feel need work have belong cost understand

1. She speaks four languages fluently. She _____ very intelligent.
2. I have never seen that man before. He _____ around here.
3. The children are very quiet. They _____ asleep.
4. This bag is not mine. It _____ to one of the students.
5. The lights are on, so someone _____ in the office.
6. He is looking at the timetable. He _____ some information about the next train.

7. That watch is made of gold. It _____ a fortune.
8. You look pale. You _____ well.
9. She wasn't in class when we explained this. She _____ the instructions.
10. They are wearing matching T-shirts. They _____ a sports team.

Exercise 3: Choose the Best Modal Verb

Choose the best option. Sometimes more than one answer is grammatically possible, but choose the most natural one.

1. That man _____ be our new teacher. I saw him talking to the headteacher. a) must b) can't c) mustn't
2. She _____ be at work. It is Sunday, and her office is closed. a) must b) might c) can't
3. The parcel _____ arrive today, but I am not sure. a) must b) may c) can't
4. You _____ be hungry after walking for three hours. a) must b) can't c) couldn't
5. This _____ be the wrong password. I copied it from the email. a) must b) might c) can't
6. They _____ be twins. They look similar, but one is much older. a) must b) may c) can't
7. The phone is ringing. It _____ be Mum; she usually calls at this time. a) could b) can't c) mustn't
8. He _____ be very busy because he has not replied to any messages today. a) must b) can't c) mustn't
9. This restaurant _____ be good. There is a queue outside every evening. a) can't b) must c) mightn't
10. We _____ be lost. This street is not on the map. a) might b) can't c) mustn't

Exercise 4: Deductions About Things Happening Now

Use modal + be + -ing. Complete the sentences with a logical deduction.

1. I can hear music from Anna's room. She _____.
2. The dog is barking at the front door. Someone _____.
3. Tom has not answered the phone for an hour. He _____.
4. There is smoke coming from the kitchen. Someone _____.
5. The students are laughing loudly. They _____.
6. The baby is crying. She _____.
7. The computer is very slow today. It _____.
8. Look at those dark clouds. It _____ soon.

Exercise 5: Past Deduction - Complete the Sentences

Use must have, might have, may have, could have or can't have + past participle.

1. The floor is wet. Someone _____ water. (spill)
2. I called Mia three times, but she did not answer. She _____ busy. (be)
3. You _____ Jack at the party. He was abroad all week. (see)
4. The students got excellent results. They _____ very hard. (work)
5. I cannot find my notebook. I _____ it on the bus. (leave)
6. They arrived two hours late. They _____ stuck in traffic. (get)
7. This cake is delicious. You _____ it yourself. (make)
8. He knew every answer. He _____ the questions before. (see)
9. The shop is still open. It _____ yet. (close)
10. She looks upset today. Something _____ at work. (happen)

11. The garden is completely dry. It _____ last night. (rain)
 12. The email went to the wrong person. I _____ the wrong address. (type)

Exercise 6: Find and Correct the Mistake

Each sentence contains one mistake with modal verbs of deduction. Rewrite the sentence correctly.

1. She must to be tired after the journey.
 Correction: _____
2. He might has forgotten the appointment.
 Correction: _____
3. They mustn't be at home. Their car is not outside.
 Correction: _____
4. I may left my glasses in the classroom.
 Correction: _____
5. This can't to be the right answer.
 Correction: _____
6. He must have went home early.
 Correction: _____
7. She could be forgot about the meeting.
 Correction: _____
8. They can't have been saw us.
 Correction: _____
9. Maybe he may be ill.
 Correction: _____
10. She must be knowing the truth.
 Correction: _____

Exercise 7: Cambridge-Style Sentence Transformations

Rewrite each sentence using the word given. Do not change the word given. Use between two and five words, including the word given.

1. I am sure she is tired after working all day.
MUST She _____ tired after working all day.
2. Perhaps he forgot to send the email.
MIGHT He _____ to send the email.
3. I am sure this is not the correct address.
CAN'T This _____ the correct address.
4. Perhaps they are waiting at the wrong entrance.
COULD They _____ at the wrong entrance.
5. I am sure he did not steal your wallet.
CAN'T He _____ your wallet.

6. Perhaps I left my umbrella on the train.

MAY I _____ my umbrella on the train.

7. I am sure they were working late last night.

MUST They _____ late last night.

8. I am sure she does not know about the surprise.

CAN'T She _____ about the surprise.

9. Perhaps the neighbours were having a party.

MIGHT The neighbours _____ a party.

10. I am sure you misunderstood the instructions.

MUST You _____ the instructions.

11. Perhaps the teacher is marking our tests now.

MAY The teacher _____ our tests now.

12. I am sure the train has not left yet.

CAN'T The train _____ yet.

Exercise 8: Match the Evidence to the Deduction

Match 1-8 with A-H. Then underline the modal verb of deduction in each answer.

| Evidence | Deduction |
|---|---|
| 1. The lights are off and nobody is answering. | A. It must have rained recently. |
| 2. The streets are wet. | B. He could be a doctor. |
| 3. His suitcase is by the door. | C. They can't be at home. |
| 4. The restaurant is full again. | D. The food must be good. |
| 5. She looks confused. | E. It might have crashed. |
| 6. He is wearing a white coat and carrying a stethoscope. | F. He may be going away. |
| 7. The train left ten minutes ago. | G. She might not understand the instructions. |
| 8. The computer screen is frozen. | H. We can't catch it now. |

Answers: 1 ___ 2 ___ 3 ___ 4 ___ 5 ___ 6 ___ 7 ___ 8 ___

Exercise 9: Detective Context Practice

Read the situation. Complete the deductions with a suitable modal verb and the correct form of the verb in brackets.

When Laura arrived at the office on Monday morning, the main door was unlocked, the coffee machine was still warm, and there were papers all over the meeting room table. Mark's coat was on his chair, but his laptop was missing. There was also an empty sandwich packet next to the printer and a message on the whiteboard saying: "Back soon".

- Someone _____ in the office before Laura arrived. (be)
- Mark _____ his coat behind. (leave)
- He _____ nearby because his coat was still there. (be)
- He _____ his laptop with him. (take)
- He _____ lunch in the office. (eat)
- The cleaners _____ the room because the papers were still everywhere. (tidy)
- The message on the board _____ for Laura. (be)
- Mark _____ soon because the message said "Back soon". (return)

Exercise 10: Short Writing Task

Choose one situation and write 6-8 sentences. Use at least five modal verbs of deduction. Try to include present and past deduction.

- A. You arrive home and notice that the front door is open, the lights are on and your cat is hiding under the sofa.
- B. Your friend has not come to an important meeting. Their phone is off and it is raining heavily outside.
- C. You find an old photograph in a second-hand book. On the back, there is a date, a name and a short message.

Answer Key

Modal Verbs of Deduction

Exercise 1

1 A 2 B 3 C 4 B 5 A 6 C 7 B 8 A 9 C 10 B

Exercise 2

1. must be; 2. can't live / may not live; 3. must be; 4. must belong / could belong; 5. must be working / could be working; 6. may need / might need / could need; 7. must cost; 8. might not feel / may not feel; 9. can't understand; 10. must have / could have.

Exercise 3

1 a 2 c 3 b 4 a 5 b 6 c 7 a 8 a 9 b 10 a

Exercise 4 - Suggested Answers

1. She must be listening to music.
2. Someone must be standing at the front door.
3. He might be working / He could be sleeping.
4. Someone must be cooking / Something might be burning.
5. They must be enjoying themselves / They might be watching something funny.
6. She must be hungry / She might be tired.
7. It might be updating / It could be downloading something.
8. It might rain / It may be going to rain.

Exercise 5

1. must have spilt; 2. must have been / might have been; 3. can't have seen; 4. must have worked; 5. might/may/could have left; 6. might/may/could have got; 7. must have made; 8. must have seen; 9. can't have closed; 10. might/may/could have happened; 11. can't have rained; 12. must/might/may/could have typed.

Exercise 6

1. She must be tired after the journey.
2. He might have forgotten the appointment.
3. They can't be at home. Their car is not outside.
4. I may have left my glasses in the classroom.
5. This can't be the right answer.
6. He must have gone home early.
7. She could have forgotten about the meeting.
8. They can't have seen us. / They can't have been seen by us.
9. Maybe he is ill. / He may be ill. Avoid using maybe and may be together.
10. She must know the truth.

Exercise 7

1. must be; 2. might have forgotten; 3. can't be; 4. could be waiting; 5. can't have stolen; 6. may have left; 7. must have been working; 8. can't know; 9. might have been having; 10. must have misunderstood; 11. may be marking; 12. can't have left.

Exercise 8

1 C 2 A 3 F 4 D 5 G 6 B 7 H 8 E

Exercise 9 - Suggested Answers

1. must have been; 2. must have left; 3. might/may/could be; 4. must have taken / might have taken; 5. must have eaten / might have eaten; 6. can't have tidied; 7. might/may/could be; 8. might/may/could return.

Exercise 10

Students' own answers. Check that they use at least five modal verbs of deduction and include both present and past deduction where possible.