

Expressing Probability in English

May, Might, Could, Will, Must, Can't, Probably, Likely and More

Name:	Date:	Level: B1+ / B2
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Mini Reference: Probability Scale

- Very certain: will, definitely, certainly, must
- Very likely: probably, likely
- Possible: may, might, could, possibly, perhaps, maybe
- Unlikely or impossible: probably won't, unlikely, can't, impossible

Exercise 1: Match the Probability Words

Match the words and phrases with the correct level of certainty. Write A, B, C or D.

A Very certain	B Very likely	C Possible	D Unlikely / impossible
1. definitely ____		2. might ____	
3. unlikely ____		4. probably ____	
5. can't ____		6. possibly ____	
7. certainly ____		8. likely ____	
9. may ____		10. impossible ____	

Exercise 2: Choose the Best Modal Verb

Choose the best option: will, may, might, could, must or can't.

- The lights are on, so they _____ be at home.
- I'm not sure, but she _____ be in a meeting.
- That _____ be Peter. Peter is in Italy this week.
- Don't worry. I'm sure everything _____ be fine.
- The sky is very dark. It _____ rain soon.
- He has run ten kilometres. He _____ be exhausted.
- This answer _____ be right. The teacher marked it wrong.
- They _____ decide to stay another night, but they haven't made a decision yet.
- She speaks five languages. She _____ work as a translator.
- We _____ probably arrive at about seven.

Exercise 3: Adverbs of Probability

Put the adverb in the correct place in each sentence. Write the full sentence.

- She will arrive late. (probably) _____
- They are interested in the course. (clearly) _____
- He will pass the exam. (definitely) _____
- We will stay another day. (possibly) _____
- The meeting will finish early. (certainly) _____
- I made a mistake. (probably) _____

Exercise 4: Maybe or May Be?

Choose *maybe* or *may be*.

1. _____ she is tired after the journey.
2. She _____ tired after the journey.
3. They _____ at the cinema now.
4. _____ they forgot about the lesson.
5. This _____ the correct answer, but I'm not sure.
6. _____ we should ask the teacher.
7. He _____ ill today.
8. _____ he is working from home.

Exercise 5: Likely, Unlikely, Possible or Impossible

Complete the sentences with *likely*, *unlikely*, *possible* or *impossible*.

1. It is _____ that prices will rise next year. Everyone expects it.
2. It is _____ to finish this report in five minutes. It is too long.
3. It is _____ that he will accept the job. He didn't sound interested.
4. It is _____ that she missed the train. She left home late.
5. They are _____ to win the match because their best players are injured.
6. She is _____ to pass the exam because she has studied very hard.
7. Is it _____ to change the date of the meeting?
8. It is _____ that he is the manager. He is only twelve years old.

Exercise 6: Sentence Transformations

Rewrite each sentence using the word in brackets. Do not change the meaning.

1. I'm sure she is tired. (must) _____
2. Perhaps he is at work. (might) _____
3. I'm sure this is not the right address. (can't) _____
4. There is a good chance that prices will rise. (likely) _____
5. Perhaps they forgot the meeting. (may) _____
6. I don't think he will come. (unlikely) _____
7. I'm sure you will enjoy the course. (definitely) _____
8. It is possible that the train is delayed. (could) _____

Exercise 7: Correct the Mistakes

Each sentence has one mistake. Correct it.

1. He must to be tired. _____
2. She will probably to come later. _____
3. Maybe he may be at work. _____
4. It is likely she will win the competition. (make it more formal) _____
5. That mustn't be Tom. Tom is much taller. _____
6. She maybe busy at the moment. _____
7. It is impossible that he remember everything. _____
8. They might to cancel the class. _____
9. He probably won't to agree with us. _____
10. It can't to be true. _____

Exercise 8: Complete the Short Dialogues

Complete each dialogue with a suitable probability expression. More than one answer may be possible.

1. A: Where is Anna?
B: Her coat is here, so she _____ be in the building.
Answer: _____
2. A: Do you think Mark will join us?
B: I'm not sure. He _____ come later.
Answer: _____
3. A: Is this answer correct?
B: No, it _____ be correct. Look at the question again.
Answer: _____
4. A: Are you going to apply for the course?
B: _____. I need to think about it.
Answer: _____
5. A: Will the test be difficult?
B: It will _____ be challenging, but you're ready.
Answer: _____
6. A: Why is the baby crying?
B: She _____ be hungry.
Answer: _____

Exercise 9: Speaking or Writing Practice

Choose three prompts and write two or three sentences for each. Use at least two probability expressions in each answer.

- What will probably change in education in the next ten years?
- What might happen if people work from home more often?
- What is likely to become more expensive in the future?
- What can't be replaced by technology?
- What might be difficult for someone learning English?

Your answers:

Answer Key

Exercise 1

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

Exercise 2

1 must; 2 may/might/could; 3 can't; 4 will; 5 may/might/could; 6 must; 7 can't; 8 may/might/could; 9 may/might/could; 10 will.

Exercise 3

1. She will probably arrive late.
2. They are clearly interested in the course.
3. He will definitely pass the exam.
4. We will possibly stay another day.
5. The meeting will certainly finish early.
6. I probably made a mistake.

Exercise 4

1 Maybe; 2 may be; 3 may be; 4 Maybe; 5 may be; 6 Maybe; 7 may be; 8 Maybe.

Exercise 5

1 likely; 2 impossible; 3 unlikely; 4 possible; 5 unlikely; 6 likely; 7 possible; 8 impossible.

Exercise 6

1. She must be tired.
2. He might be at work.
3. This can't be the right address.
4. Prices are likely to rise. / It is likely that prices will rise.
5. They may have forgotten the meeting. / They may forget the meeting. (depending on context)
6. He is unlikely to come. / It is unlikely that he will come.
7. You will definitely enjoy the course.
8. The train could be delayed.

Exercise 7

1. He must be tired.
2. She will probably come later.
3. Maybe he is at work. / He may be at work.
4. It is likely that she will win the competition.
5. That can't be Tom. Tom is much taller.
6. She may be busy at the moment.
7. It is impossible that he remembers everything. / It is impossible for him to remember everything.
8. They might cancel the class.
9. He probably won't agree with us.
10. It can't be true.

Exercise 8

Suggested answers: 1 must; 2 might/may/could; 3 can't; 4 Maybe/Perhaps; 5 probably; 6 must/might/could.

Exercise 9

Students' own answers. Check that they use probability language accurately, for example: probably, might, may, could, likely, unlikely, definitely, can't and must.