

# MODALS OF POSSIBILITY AND CERTAINTY

## DEDUCTIONS IN THE PRESENT

**IT'S CERTAIN-** we are certain something is true (I'M SURE)

**MUST + INFINITIVE**

He **must be** English. He speaks English fluently.  
He **must be** working. The lights in the office are on.

**IT'S POSSIBLE-** we think that something is possible but we are not sure. (MAYBE, PERHAPS)

**MAY / MAY NOT + INFINITIVE**

**MIGHT / MIGHT NOT + INFINITIVE**

**COULD + INFINITIVE**

She **may / might / could come** to the party, she doesn't know what to do.  
They **may / might not come** because it's raining.  
She **may / might / could** be working that day.

**IT'S IMPOSSIBLE –** we are certain something is impossible (I'M SURE)

**CAN'T + INFINITIVE**

She **can't be** British because I know she was born in Madrid.  
She **can't be** working now, the shop is closed on Sundays.

Re-phrase these sentences using **must, can't** or **may/might/could**.

Example: It's impossible that he's English. *He **can't be** English.*

I'm certain that she is a doctor. *She **must be** a doctor.*

1. Perhaps she's tired.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. It's impossible that you are right.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. I'm certain that he knows the answer.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Perhaps they are at home now.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. I'm certain that he lives there.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. It's impossible that it is a real diamond ring.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Perhaps I have influenza.

\_\_\_\_\_

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## DEDUCTIONS IN THE PAST

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### IT'S CERTAIN (I'm sure)

#### **MUST + HAVE + Past Participle**

He must have gone out.

#### **MUST + HAVE + BEEN + Past Participle (passive)**

He must have been killed.

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### IT'S PROBABLE (I'm not sure / maybe / perhaps)

#### **MAY (not) / MIGHT (not) / COULD + HAVE + Past Participle**

She may have missed the bus.

You might have left your bag on the train.

You could have made a mistake.

#### **MAY (not) / MIGHT (not) / COULD + HAVE + BEEN + Past Participle (passive)**

You might have been lied.

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### IT'S IMPOSSIBLE (I'm sure it's impossible)

#### **CAN'T / COULDN'T + HAVE + Past Participle**

She can't have caught the 10.15 train.

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1. Re-phrase these sentences using **must, can't** or **may/might/could**.

Example:

*a. Perhaps they **went** home early.*

*They **might have gone** home early.*

*b. It's **impossible** that you **were** at the cinema.*

*You **can't have been** at the cinema.*

1. I'm certain that she forgot about the meeting.

\_\_\_\_\_

2. It's impossible that he knew my phone number.

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Perhaps they have received your letter by now.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. I'm certain that he took a later bus.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Perhaps she was tired.

\_\_\_\_\_

6. It's impossible that the money was stolen this morning.

\_\_\_\_\_

7. I'm certain that Sue was invited to the party.

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Answer the questions in A using an idea from B and **must** or **can't**.

Example:

*His bedroom lights are still on, so he can't be asleep.*

A

1. ~~Is he asleep?~~
2. Is he hungry?
3. Are they at home?
4. Has he got a cold?
5. Is she married?
6. Is he at school?
7. Do they know each other?

*8. Has she got a driving licence?*

B

- She's got a ring on her wedding finger.
- They've never met.
- Today's a school holiday.
- She's only 15.
- He keeps sneezing.
- ~~- His bedroom light is still on.~~
- Their car is parked outside their house.
- She hasn't eaten all day.

2. Answer the questions in A using **must have ..** or **can't / couldn't have ...** and a reason from B.

Example:

*He can't have gone home because his car is still here.*

A

1. Has he gone home?
2. Did she have much money?
3. Did he work hard for the exam?
4. Was she tired?
5. Were they asleep?
6. Was he frightened?
7. Did they hear our conversation?

*8. Has he gone to the library?*

B

- Their bedroom light was still on.
- It's not open today.
- He was shaking like a jelly.
- His car is still here.
- They knew everything we said.
- He did really well in it.
- She asked me to lend her some.
- She went to bed very early.