

[Click Here](#)



Quality ESL grammar worksheets, quizzes and games - from A to Z - for teachers & learnersMODALS of PROBABILITY GrammarWorksheet Modals of Probability (with 'be') fortalking about the present - with Signs / Symbols Write sentences about the signs / symbols. Use modals of probability.Answers will vary, but possible answers are given on Page 2Level: Intermediate to Upper IntermediateTime: Approx 15 minutes Download the PDF file by clicking on the goldbutton below! GrammarWorksheet Modals of Probability (with 'be') fortalking about the present Write sentences about the pictures. Use modals of probability.Answers will vary, but possible answers are given on Page 2Level: Intermediate to Upper IntermediateTime: Approx 15 minutes Download the PDF file by clicking on the goldbutton below! GrammarWorksheet Modals of Probability for talkingabout the present1Multiple-choice questions; with ANSWER KEY and percentage conversion chartLevel: Intermediate to Upper IntermediateTime: Approx 15 minutes Download the PDF file by clicking on the goldbutton below! Try the interactive version of the above quiz! GrammarWorksheet Modals of Probability (with 'be') fortalking about the present Find the matching sentences - Be careful: 5 circles don't match! Answer Key and Grammar Notes on Page 2.Level: Intermediate to Upper IntermediateTime: Approx 10 to 15 minutes Download the PDF file by clicking on the goldbutton below! Click here to download this explanation as a PDF.Click here for all the exercises about modal verbs.Click here for our complete programme to perfect your English grammar.Here's a list of the modal verbs in English:cancouldmaymightwillwouldmustshallshouldought toModals are different from normal verbs:1: They don't use an 's' for the third person singular.2: They make questions by inversion ('she can go?' becomes 'can she go?').3: They are followed directly by the infinitive of another verb (without 'to').First, they can be used when we want to say how sure we are that something happened / is happening / will happen. We often call these 'modals of deduction' or 'speculation' or 'certainty' or 'probability'.We use 'can' and 'could' to talk about a skill or ability.We can use verbs such as 'must' or 'should' to say when something is necessary or unnecessary, or to give advice.We can use verbs such as 'can', 'could' and 'may' to ask for and give permission. We also use modal verbs to say something is not allowed.We can use 'will' and 'would' to talk about habits or things we usually do, or did in the past. English grammar practice exercise, intermediate level.In this exercise you will practise using modal verbs to express present probability: must, cant, could, may, might.Exercise instructionsFill in each gap using must, cant, could, may or might. There is a grammar explanation at the bottom of the page.ExampleSomeone is knocking on the door. Im sure its my brother he promised to come today.Someone is knocking on the door. It be my brother he promised to come today. Structure: modal + verb infinitive without to must be, cant be, must have, cant have, etc. We use must to express that we feel sure that something is true. The team is playing really well today, they must win. They must be very rich look at their big house! We use cant to say we are sure that something is impossible. She cant be so ill I saw her playing volleyball yesterday. I dont believe you it cant be true. Structure: modal verb + verb infnitive without to may be, might do could go, etc. We use may, could or might to say that it is possible that something will happen in the future or is happening now. They may be arriving tomorrow.He might be away on holiday at the moment.He could be away on holiday. He might get the job. The negative of may is may not.The negative of might is might not.Both may not and might not mean that it is possible that something will not happen or is not happening now. He might not get the job. I may not pass the exam.I might not go to the match tomorrow. We dont use could not to express probability in the present and future.I couldnt go to the match tomorrow. Our academic editing and proofreading services Your dissertation can be carefully and sensitively proofread by one of our talented, professional editors, ensuring that your written English is clear, fluent and precise.A piece of work that you can take immense pride in.Dissertation Proofreading Writing your PhD thesis invariably takes great time and effort.By using our thesis proofreading service you can be sure that all your endeavours to build an original, persuasive argument will be fully recognized and appreciated.Thesis Proofreading Essay writing can be a major challenge, requiring language that is concise, vigorous and engaging.Our experienced editors can offer invaluable advice on producing winning essays so that eventually you will no longer even need our essay proofreading service.Essay Proofreading Writing an academic essay or dissertation can be difficult and challenging. When you submit your work or prepare your essay for publication you need 100% certainty that it is completely free of errors, inconsistencies and grammatical muddle.By using the Scribbr Academic Proofreading Service all mistakes are corrected and with our friendly feedback you will learn how to be a better writer.Weve already proofread over 10,000 academic documents! Scribbrs proofreading and editing services are rated 4.7/5 based on 14,907 reviews on Trustpilot. If you are an ESL student whose English skills leave room for improvement, or just wish to ensure there are no language mistakes in your document, then why not use the Scribbr Academic Proofreading Service?By using our proofreading service all mistakes will be corrected via Track Changes in Microsoft Word. Our editors will also provide friendly, helpful feedback on how to improve your writing. Scribbr specializes in proofreading academic documents. All our editors have themselves written adissertationor thesis and have first-hand experience of all the struggles that this entails.Why not allow these willing specialists to help to improve your own writing? Scribbr has many satisfied customers and has already proofread over 10,000 documents.We would love to help you improve your document too. Scribbr is an academic proofreading service founded in 2012. The company has grown to include over 400 editors, and is now one of the largest academic proofreading companies.We deliver premium quality work at a fair and competitive price. Both students and academics value our quality and our prompt service, rating our service at4.5. Get expert help from Scribbrs academic editors, who will proofread and edit your essay, thesis, or dissertation to perfection. Detect and resolve unintentional plagiarism with the Scribbr Plagiarism Checker, so you can submit your paper with confidence. Generate accurate references and citations with Scribbrs free reference generator and save hours of repetitive work. Our dream team Youre not alone. Together with our team and highly qualified editors, we answer all your questions about academic writing.Open 24/7, 365 days a year. Always available to help you. Meet the team Scribbr Knowledge Base Free resources used by 4,000,000 students every month. Bite-sized videos that guide you through the writing process. Get the popcorn, sit back, and learn! Ready-made slides for teachers and professors that want to kickstart their lectures. Accessible how-to guides, full of examples that help you write a flawless essay, proposal, or dissertation. Handy checklists to make sure you don't forget anything important. Time-saving templates that you can download and edit in Word or Google Docs. Must, may, might, cant and could are used to show how certain a speaker is that a past situation happened or didnt happen.Affirmative Formula: MODAL + HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE (to show how certain the speaker is that something happened) Must have + past participle shows a great deal of certainty that something happened, but there is still some doubt in the speakers mind. He/sho is not 100% certain. For example: The students did well on the test. They must have studied hard. (There are other possible reasons why the students did well on the test. It might have been very easy, or they might have already learned the material. The speaker uses must have studied hard to show that he/she thinks this is the most logical reason they did so well.) For example: Ive phoned Jim several times, but he doesnt answer. He must have gone out. (The speaker believes this is the most logical reason why Jim doesnt answer the phone. However, other reasons are possible. He might not have heard the phone, or he might not have wanted to talk to anyone.) May, might and could convey the idea that a speaker is only 50% or less certain that something happened. The use of could implies a little more certainty. For example: My wife doesnt answer the phone. She may (might, could) have gone shopping. (The speaker doesnt know for sure that his wife went shopping. However, it is his best guess.) Negative Formula: MODAL + NOT + BASE VERB + PAST PARTICIPLE (to show how certain the speaker is that something didnt happen) Cant or couldnt have + past participle shows that the speaker is very certain something didnt happen. For example: Robin looks tired today. She cant have slept well last night. (This is the speakers best guess as to why Robin looks tired. Of course, other reasons are possible. For instance, she might be ill.) May or might not have + past participlecant have + past participle Shows that the speaker is 50% or less certain that something didnt happen. For example: There was a strange light in the sky yesterday evening. I dont know for sure what it was, but I may have seen a U.F.O. (Unidentified Flying Object). An appropriate modal + have is used in most short answers. However, if the question has a be verb, the formula for responding is appropriate modal + have been. For example: Person A: Has Jennifer decided which courses she's going to take next semester? Person B: Im not sure. She might have. Person C: Do you think she'll take the French course? Person D: I don't know. He may have. When you are sure that you understand the lesson, you can continue with the exercises. Click here to download this explanation as a PDF.Click here for all the exercises about modal verbs.Click here for our complete programme to perfect your English grammar. We can use these modal verbs (also called modals of deduction, speculation or certainty) when we want to make a guess about something. We choose the verb depending on how sure we are.1: Talking about the present:must / might / could / may / cant + infinitiveFor example:I am waiting for Julie with another friend, David.I ask: 'Where is Julie?'David guesses:She must be on the bus. (I'm fairly sure this is a good guess)She might come soon. (maybe)She could be lost. (maybe)She may be in the wrong room. (maybe)She cant be at home. (I'm fairly sure this isn't true)Notice that the opposite of 'must' is 'cant' in this case.Will / wontWe use will and wont when we are very sure: Should / shouldn'tShould and shouldn't are used to make an assumption about what is probably true, if everything is as we expect:They should be there by now.It shouldn't take long to drive here today. We use could implye a little more certainty. For example: My wife doesn't usually use for negative events. Instead, it's a better idea to use will:The underground will be very busy now (not: 'should be').CanCan is used for something that is generally possible, something we know sometimes happens:Prices can be high in London.Can is not used to talk about specific possibilities:He could be on the bus (not: 'can be').2: Using modal verbs to talk about the past:must / might / could / may / cant+ have + past participle(Click here to review how to make the past participle,must have + past particlemight / might not have + past particlemight / couldnt have + past particplemay / may not have + past particplecant have + past particplecan't have + past particpleFor example:You: Where was Julie last night?David:She must have forgotten about our date.She might have worked late.She could have taken the wrong bus.She may have felt ill.She cant have stayed at home.Will / wont+ have + past participleWill and wont / will not + have + past particple are used for past certainty (compare with present use of 'will' above):The parcel will have arrived before now.Should + have + past particpleShould + have + past particple can be used to make an assumption about what has probably happened, if everything is as we expect (compare with present use of 'should' above):The train should have left by now.CouldWe can use could + infinitive to talk about a general possibility in the past (compare with the use of 'can' above):Prices could be high in the sixteenth century.This is not used to talk about specific possibilities in the past (instead we use could + have + past particple):He could have been working late (not: 'could be'. As this is a specific possibility, 'could be' is present tense)Click here for our complete programme to perfect your English grammar. Download full-size image from PinterestModal verbs of deduction and speculationWe can use some modal verbs + an infinitive to talk about how certain we are that something is or is not true. We can also use some modal verbs + have + past particple to talk about how certain we are that something was or was not true in the past.Must have doneWe use must have + past particpleto say that we are quite sure that something was or happened in the past.I cant find my wallet! I must have droppedit in the taxi.You must have had a real scare when you sawthe crocodile.Cant have doneWe usecant/couldnt have + past particpleto say that we are quite sure that something did NOT happen or was NOT true in the past.You cant/couldnt have seen John last night. He was in hospital.She cant/couldnt have passed the test. She didnt even open the books. Note that for negative deduction, we use cant(NOT mustnt)He mustnt be that famous. He cant be that famous. Could/might/may have doneWe can usecould/might/may have + past particpleto say that we are quite sure that something did NOT happen or was NOT true in the past.You cant/couldnt have seen John last night. He was in hospital.She cant/couldnt have passed the test. She didnt even open the books. Note that for negative deduction, we use cant(NOT mustnt)He mustnt be that famous. He cant be that famous. Could/might/may have doneWe can usecould/might/may have + past particple to say that something was possible in the past or someone had the possibility to do something but didnt do it.You could have called me to say you werent coming. I waited for hours.We can also use could/might/mayhave + past particpleto say thatits possiblethat something was true or happened in the past.Its been three days. Theymight/may have finished painting the house by now.If they left at 9, theymight/may have already arrived. Note that we use might not or may not (NOT could not) to talk about a negative possibility.She might/may not have heard us. Knock again.Should/ought to have doneWe use should have/ought to have+ past particpleto talk about a situationexpected to happen in the past. This form is normally used for criticism.You should/ought to have already packed your things. Were going to be late.He should/ought to have studied more. Nobody fails if they study. Home > Resources (Grammar & vocabulary) > Grammar rules > Modal verbs > Structure: modal verb + have + past particple must have been, cant have gone, couldnt have gone, etc. We use must have to express that we feel sure that something was true in the past. They must have left early.He must have already gone. We use cant have or couldnt have to say that we believe something was impossible in the past. He cant have escaped through this window its too small.She cant have said that.She couldnt have said that. Structure: modal + have + past particple may have been, could have gone, might have lost, etc. We use may have, could have, might have to say that it was possible that something happened in the past (but we are not 100% sure). He may have missed the bus.The road might have been blocked.(= I think the road was blocked, but Im not 100% sure.) The negatives are may not have and might not have. We dont use couldnt have in the same way. He may not have left yet.I might not have given her the money. Im not sure. Practise this grammar:modal verbs for past probability exercise must have, cant have, could have, might have(intermediate)See also: must have vs. had to >> A modal verb (also called a modal auxiliary verb) is used along with a main verb to express possibility, ability, permission, or necessity. For example, in the statement you must leave, must is a modal verb indicating that its necessary for the subject (you) to perform the action of the verb (leave).The modal verb will is used to form the future tense, indicating an action that has not yet occurred (e.g., I will clean the garage).Examples: Modal verbs in a sentenceWe should listen to some music.Can you drive me to the airport?Amanda might practise her German. Be assured that you'll submit flawless writing. Upload your document to correct all your mistakes. How are modal verbs used in sentences?Modal verbs are used along with a main verb to indicate ability, necessity, possibility, and permission. In sentences containing modal verbs, the main verb typically takes the infinitive form. Modal verbs come before main verbs and never change form.Examples: How to use modal verbs! must walk to work today.You may have as many cookies as youd like.Lina must order tickets in advance if she wants to go to the theatre. The academic proofreading tool we have been trained on 1000s of academic texts and by native English editors. Making it the most accurate and reliable proofreading tool for students. Upload my document Modal verbs listBelow is a table that illustrates some of the various uses of modal verbs. Note that modal verbs are very commonly used in a wide variety of senses this table doesnt cover every possible usage.Modal verbFunctionExampleCanIndicate abilityIndicate permission (informal)Make a request (informal)I can play the guitar.We can drive or walk.You can borrow that book.Can I have some water?CouldPast form of canIndicate possibilityMake a polite requestShe could speak French.You could become a chef.Could you tell me the time?MayIndicate possibilityIndicate permission (formal)Make a request (formal)Dana may arrive late.You may enter.May I respond?MightIndicate possibility! might order pizza.MustIndicate obligationIndicate likelihoodCyclists must wear helmets.You must be very proud.ShallIndicate a future action (normally used only with I and we)Ask a question (normally used only with I and we)I shall attend.Shall we arrange a meeting?ShouldMake a suggestionIndicate likelihoodYou should watch that film.Tom should be at the office.WillIndicate a future action or eventMake a polite requestFay will book the venue.Will you get the door?WouldFast form of willMake a polite requestShe would often work late.Would you call back later? Modal verbs are classed as a type of auxiliary verb. Auxiliary verbs are used along with a main verb to express tense, mood, or voice. However, unlike modal verbs, regular auxiliary verbs follow subject-verb agreement and must be conjugated for tense and mood.Examples: Auxiliary verbs in a sentenceMary was building a sandcastle.Gordon has burned the toast.Do you know what time it is?Modal verbs can be used along with auxiliary verbs to refer to possible past, continuous, or future action.When a modal verb is followed by another auxiliary verb (e.g., have, be), the main verb takes either the past particple form (typically ending in -ed, -n, or -t) or the present particple form (ending in -ing).The modal verb will is used in all aspects of the future tense (e.g., I will talk, you will be travelling).Examples: Modal and auxiliary verbs combinedHe should have asked me first.You may be wondering what I mean.Farrah will have finished work by then.Modal verbs and moodThe grammatical mood of a verb indicates the intention of the sentence. Modal verbs and auxiliary verbs are used along with a main verb to express mood.Grammatical moodFunctionExampleIndicativeState a factLana is drinking coffee.ImperativeExpress a command or a request (often with a negative auxiliary verb)Dont forget to call.InterrogativeAsk a questionWould you open the window?ConditionalExpress a wish, doubt, or hypothetical situationIf you want to get the bus.SubjunctiveExpress a wish, doubt, or hypothetical situationIf you were free, we could watch a movie. The academic proofreading tool has been trained on 1000s of academic texts and by native English editors. Making it the most accurate and reliable proofreading tool for students. Upload my document Other uses of modal verbsModal verbs have various other functions in English. They can also be used in indirect speechIn indirect speechIn indirect speech modal verbs are used to indicate what someone else said. While most modal verbs stay the same when used in indirect speech, the past form of some modal verbs is used instead (e.g., can becomes could).Examples: Modal verbs and reported speechDarren said I will visit on Saturday.Darren said he would visit on Saturday.Pria said we should go to France.Pria said we should go to France.Negative statementsIn negative statements containing modal verbs, the adverb not comes immediately after the modal verb and before all other verbs. The negative form is often contracted (e.g., would not becomes wouldnt).Examples: How to use modal verbsTera cant focus because her brother is playing the drums.You mustnt play football inside the house anymore.EmphasisIn everyday conversation, people sometimes place emphasis on a modal verb to refute a previous statement or question. The emphasised word is often italicised when written down.Examples: Modal verbs emphasising a statementWhy cant you be nice?You wont finish the project on time.I will finish it on time!Other interesting language articlesIf you want to know more about commonly confused words, definitions, common mistakes, and differences between US and UK spellings, make sure to check out some of our other language articles with explanations, examples, and quizzes. Frequently asked questions Is it would of or would have? Would is a modal verb thats often used along with the auxiliary verb have to indicate that something was possible in the past but no longer is (e.g., She would have been a professional athlete if she hadnt broken her leg). It can be contracted to wouldve.People sometimes mistakenly write would of because of its similar pronunciation. However, would of is never correct. What does may mean? May is a modal verb used to indicate possibility (e.g., I may miss the bus), make a request (e.g., May I have a drink?), or indicate permission (e.g., You may sit down). We strongly encourage students to use sources in their work. You can cite our article (APA Style) or take a deep dive into the articles below. This Scribbr article Ryan, E. (2023, December 06). What Is a Modal Verb? | Definition & Examples. Scribbr. Retrieved 26 May 2025, from Sources Aarts, B. (2011). Oxford modern English grammar. Oxford University Press. Butterfield, J. (Ed.). (2015). Fowlers dictionary of modern English usage (4th ed.). Oxford University Press. Show all sources (3) Garner, B. A. (2016). Garners modern English usage (4th ed.). Oxford University Press. We can use modal verbs with the past particple of the main verb: modal + have + past particple We use modals this way when we are talking about the situation that happened in the past and can't be changed anymore. For example You could have hurt yourself. They should have warned me. He must have got lost. It is the same form as in the third conditionals. Compare If I had had some cash on me, I would have bought an ice-cream. I would have chosen a direct flight if there had been tickets left. In spoken English, you will often hear shortened forms like could've, should've, would've. To make a negative form, add "not" after the modal: modal + not + have + past particple It is common to use contracted negative forms like couldn't, shouldn't. Examples She shouldn't have said that. We couldn't have foreseen that change of plans. He might not have noticed the error. To make a question with a modal verb referring to the past, we swap the modal and the subject: modal + subject + have + past particple ... ? Examples Should I have called you earlier? Would he have believed me? Meaning of past modals could have + past particple Something was possible in the past or there was a probability, but it didn't happen. He could have slept till noon but the alarm clock woke him up. We could have stayed longer but we decided to leave. He could have been seriously injured. Fortunately, nothing happened. couldn't have + past particple Opposite to could have: something was hypothetically impossible. I can't believe Kevin didn't show up! He couldn't have forgotten about the meeting. Thanks for your help! I couldn't have managed without you! I checked the equipment many times: it couldn't have failed. Keep in mind that we don't use "can" as a past modal. However, you can use can't as a synonym to couldn't. The boy can't have written such an essay on his own. (= couldn't) but Im not 100% sure.) The negatives are may not have and might not have. We dont use couldnt have in the same way. He may not have left yet.I might not have given her the money. Im not sure. Practise this grammar:modal verbs for past probability exercise must have, cant have, could have, might have(intermediate)See also: must have vs. had to >> Share copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material.

Modal verbs of probability in the past. Modals of probability past. Modals of probability.