Modals of Deduction

must have · can't have · might have… | B2 · Answers on the last page.

THE RULE

We use modals to say how sure we are about something.

PRESENT → modal + infinitive
must (sure yes) · **can't / couldn't** (sure no) · **might / may / could** (possible)
She must be rich. · He can't be asleep. · They might be late.

PAST → modal + have + past participle
She must have left. · He can't have seen us. · They might have forgotten.

1 Present deduction — complete with must / can't / might + be.

1 The lights are off. They _____ (not) at home.

2 She's yawning. She _____ really tired.

3 I'm not sure where he is. He _____ in the garden.

4 You haven't eaten all day. You _____ starving!

5 That _____ (not) true — it's impossible!

6 The phone's ringing. It _____ my mother, but I'm not sure.

2 Past deduction — complete with must have / can't have / might have + past participle.

1 The ground is wet. It _____ (rain) last night.

2 He failed? He _____ (study) at all!

3 I can't find my keys. I _____ (leave) them at work.

4 She knew every answer. She _____ (read) the book.

5 They're not here yet. They _____ (get) lost.

6 You _____ (not / see) her yesterday — she was abroad!

3 Choose the correct option.

1 The dog's barking. Someone (must be / can't be) at the door.

2 He (can't have / must have) passed — he never studies.

3 She's late. She (might have / can't have) missed the train.

4 You (must be / might be) joking! That's ridiculous.

5 They (can't be / must be) hungry; they've just eaten.

6 I (might have / must have) left the oven on — I'm not sure.

4 Rewrite using the modal in brackets. Keep the same meaning.

1 *I'm sure she is at work. (MUST)*

2 *Perhaps they forgot. (MIGHT)*

3 *It's impossible that he said that. (CAN'T)*

4 *I'm certain they got lost. (MUST)*

5 *Maybe she is sleeping. (COULD)*

5 Find and correct the mistake in each sentence.

1 *She must to be tired.*

2 *He can't have went home.*

3 *They must have forgot the meeting.*

4 *You can't be serious — it must been a joke.*

5 *She might has left already.*

Soluciones

Answer key.

1 · Present deduction

1 can't be 2 must be 3 might be 4 must be 5 can't be 6 might be

2 · Past deduction

1 must have rained 2 can't have studied 3 might have left
4 must have read 5 might have got 6 can't have seen

3 · Choose

1 must be 2 can't have 3 might have 4 must be 5 can't be 6 might have

4 · Rewrite

1 She must be at work.
2 They might have forgotten.
3 He can't have said that.
4 They must have got lost.
5 She could be sleeping.

5 · Error correction

1 She must be tired. 2 He can't have gone home. 3 They must have forgotten the meeting.
4 … it must have been a joke. 5 She might have left already.