



MODALS OF POSSIBILITY & DEDUCTION

© talkmor.com

1. Talking about possibilities

We use **may, might, and could** when something is possible, but we are not sure.

- It **may** rain later.
- She **might be** at home.
- He **could be** busy.

These three words often have a similar meaning.

We use **must** when we are quite sure something is true.

- The lights are on. They **must be** home.

We use **can't** when we are quite sure something is NOT true.

- It's only 6:00 a.m. He **can't be** at work yet.

Look at the difference:

It might be John.

→ Maybe John.

It must be John.

→ I am almost sure it is John.

It can't be John.

→ I am almost sure it isn't John.

2. How sure are you?

Put these expressions in order from **least certain** to **most certain**.

- It must be...
- It might be...
- It could be...
- It can't be...

Least certain: _____

_____ :

_____ :

Most certain: _____

3. Choose the best answer

- I'm not sure where Sarah is.
She ____ be at home.
a) might
b) must
c) can't
- The restaurant is full of people.
The food ____ be good.
a) can't
b) must
c) might not
- It's 3 a.m. He ____ be at work.
a) can't
b) must
c) could
- Take an umbrella.
It ____ rain later.
a) must
b) can't
c) might
- I don't know who is calling.
It ____ be my brother.
a) could.
b) can't
c) must
- She has studied for ten hours.
She ____ be tired.
a) must
b) can't
c) might not

4. Complete the sentences

Use may, might, could, must, or can't.

1. I'm not sure, but John _____ be busy.
2. The baby is crying. She _____ be hungry.
3. It's midnight. They _____ be asleep.
4. I don't know where my keys are. They _____ be in my bag.
5. He has no money. He _____ buy an expensive car.
6. Look at those dark clouds. It _____ rain soon.

REAL ENGLISH BOX

When we aren't sure, these are very natural:

- It might be...
- It could be...
- Maybe...
- I'm not sure.

For stronger guesses:

- It must be...
- It can't be...

Try:

A: Where's Tom?

B: I'm not sure. He **might be** at work.

5. Make your own guesses

Complete the sentences.

1. My phone isn't here. It might be _____.
2. Someone is knocking. It could be _____.
3. My friend hasn't answered my message. He might be _____.
4. The weather looks terrible. It could _____.
5. The restaurant is very busy. The food must _____.

Compare your answers with a partner.

Teacher's Key

2. How sure are you

Least certain: **might / could**

Then: **may** if included

Then: **must**

Most certain: **must**

For classroom purposes, **might/could** can be treated as lower certainty and **must** as strong deduction. *Can't* is strong negative deduction rather than simply a point on the same certainty scale.

3. Choose the best answer

1. a
2. b
3. a
4. c
5. a
6. a

4. Complete the sentences

1. might/may/could
2. must
3. must
4. might/may/could
5. can't
6. might/may/could