

Read the rules attentively and do the tasks below:

MUST AND CAN'T FOR COMMENTING

We often use *must* or *can't* + infinitive (without *to*) when we comment on other people's experiences. This shows we are guessing about things, though we think we are probably right.

A: *I'm a heart surgeon.*

B: *Really? Wow! That **must be** stressful.* (= I'm guessing this is true, but I understand your experience may be different and I may be wrong.)

We use *must* in positive sentences. In negative sentences, we use *can't*.

A: *I've been working here for ten years now.*

B: *Wow. So you **must enjoy** it.*

A: *My husband is ill and off work at the moment, so I'm working full-time and looking after the kids.*

B: *Oh! That **can't be** easy.*

Responding to *must* / *can't* comments

When we reply to *must* / *can't* comments, we usually use a present (or past) tense to show the true facts or our own true feelings / experiences. We may use a form of the auxiliary verb *be* to avoid repeating an adjective or a form of the auxiliary verb *do* to avoid repeating a verb.

A: *It **must be** difficult.*

A: *You **must enjoy** it.*

B: *Yes, it **is** (difficult).*

B: *Yeah, I **do** (enjoy it).*

B: *It **is** (difficult) sometimes.*

B: *I **do** (enjoy it) most of the time.*

B: *No, not really. I **Actually** it **isn't** (difficult).*

B: *Not really. I **Actually** I **don't** (enjoy it).*

A: *It **can't be** easy.*

A: *You **can't enjoy** it that much.*

B: *No, it **isn't** (easy).*

B: *No, I **don't** (enjoy it very much).*

B: *Oh, it's OK.*

B: *Well, I **do** sometimes (enjoy it).*

A: *Actually, it **is** (easy).*

B: *Actually I **do** (enjoy it).*

Must is much more commonly used to comment on other people's experiences and feelings than *can't*, so practise *must* comments and replies more.

Exercise 1

Complete the dialogues with one word in each space.

Contractions count as one word.

- 1 A: We're so busy. I think I've worked 70 hours this week.
B: Wow. You _____ be exhausted.
A: I _____, but it's going to be the same next week too.
- 2 A: Between emergencies, we often have nothing to do for hours.
B: You _____ get quite bored.
A: Yeah, we _____ sometimes, but I read a lot and we sometimes play cards.
- 3 A: My husband is away a lot with work.
B: That _____ be easy when you have three young kids.
A: _____, it's fine. My mother helps me.
- 4 A: The chemicals we use have a very strong smell.
B: That must _____ horrible.
A: _____ really. I mean, it _____ to begin with, but you quickly get used to it.
- 5 A: The kids just don't listen.
B: You must _____ to scream at them sometimes. I know I would.
A: I do! But obviously I _____ actually do it. Shouting doesn't work.

We can also follow *must / can't* with *be + -ing* to form a present continuous meaning, and *have been* when talking about the past.

A: *They're going to give me a bonus.*

B: *You ~~are doing well~~ **must be doing** well.*

A: *Yes, I am.*

A: *They were two hours late.*

B: *You ~~were~~ **must've been** annoyed.*

A: *Yeah, I was. Really annoyed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

We sometimes use *I bet* instead of *must / can't*. For example, in Exercise 1, we could say:

***I bet** you're exhausted.*

***I bet** you get quite bored.*

***I bet** that isn't good.*

Exercise 2

Rewrite these responses using *I bet*.

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|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1 He must've been furious. | I bet he _____. |
| 2 They can't be making any money. | I bet they _____. |
| 3 That can't be very interesting. | I bet that _____. |
| 4 He must be earning good money. | I bet he _____. |
| 5 She can't have been feeling well. | I bet she _____. |
| 6 That can't have been much fun. | I bet that _____. |
| 7 You must be pleased about that. | I bet you _____. |
| 8 You must've been driving too fast. | I bet you _____. |