

Must, can't, may, might, could

- 1 We use **must**, **can't**, **may** and **could** with an infinitive (e.g. be, go, come, earn):

They **must** INFINITIVE
earn a lot.

- 2 CERTAINTY She **must be** rich.

Look at this example with **must**: *Jane got top marks in her exams. She **must be** very clever.*
(= From what we know, we can be certain that Jane is very clever.)

We use **must** to say we are certain:

The Greens have two houses and two cars.

*They **must earn** a lot of money.*

(= We can be sure that the Greens earn a lot of money.)

A: *There's someone outside in an orange car.*

B: *It **must be** Susan. She's the only person I know with an orange car.*

- 3 IMPOSSIBILITY She **can't be** poor.

Look at this example with **can't**:

*Mark studied hard for his exams, but he got poor marks; he **can't be** very clever.*

(= From what we know, we can guess that Mark is **not** very clever.)

We use **can't** to talk about impossibility:

*The Browns both have part-time jobs; they **can't earn** much money.* (= We can guess that the Browns do **not** earn a lot of money.)

A: *There's someone at the door. I think it's Bill.*

B: *It **can't be** Bill. He's in Australia.*

- 4 POSSIBILITY

She { may
might
could } be in the garden.

Look at this example with **may**:

A: *Eve's not in her room. Where is she?*

B: *She **may be** in the garden.* (= From what we know, **perhaps** she is in the garden.)

We use **may**, **might** and **could** for something that is possible but not certain, now or in the future:

*My sister **might come** tomorrow.* (= From what we know, perhaps she **will** come.)

Now look at this example with **may not**:

A: *I've phoned Jill, but there's no answer.*

B: *She **may not be** at home. (OR She **might not be** ...) (= Perhaps she is not at home.)*

Could not is not possible here.

Practice

- A Complete the sentences using **must** or **can't** and one of the verbs from the box.

be belong speak come spend have like live want remember

- ▶ Anna lived in America for three years, so she must speak English.
- ▶ Tom's brother doesn't know anything about medicine, so he can't be a doctor.
- 1 Jane has an incredible number of CDs. She music a lot.
- 2 Peter doesn't speak German, so he from Germany.
- 3 This jacket to Janet because it's not her size.
- 4 That man around here because he doesn't know any of the street names.
- 5 Jack a lot of clothes. He wears something different every day.
- 6 Sam's grandmother is over 80 years old, so she the Second World War.
- 7 You've got ten cats already. You to get another one.
- 8 Susan buys a new dress every day. She a lot of money on clothes.

- B** Someone has robbed a bank. The police are sure that the criminal is one of these men. Look at the pictures and complete the sentences using *can't be*, *could be* or *must be*.



- ▶ A witness says that the robber had short hair. If that's true, then it *can't be*..... Drake or Rogers, but it *could be*..... Hall.
- ▶ A witness says that the robber had glasses. If that's true, then it *can't be*..... Brown or Drake. It *must be*..... either Hall or Rogers or Smith.
- 1 A witness says that the robber had black hair. If that's true, then it Hall, but it Brown.
- 2 A witness says that the robber had a moustache. If that's true, then it Rogers but it Drake or Brown.
- 3 A witness says that the robber didn't have a beard. If that's true, then it Drake or Brown but it Hall or Smith.
- 4 A witness says that the robber had a moustache, but no beard. If that's true, then it Drake or Rogers. It Hall.
- 5 A witness says that the robber had black hair and wore glasses. If that's true, then it Rogers. It Hall.
- 6 And if what everyone says is true, then it

- C** Complete the dialogues with *must*, *can't* or *might* and one of the phrases in the box.

cost a lot of money	be a soldier	work long hours	go to Portugal
come this weekend	take much interest	also be at the shops	be at the gym

- ▶ Ruth: I think Ann's brother is in the army.
James: He *can't be a soldier*... ; he's only 15.
- 1 Bob: What are you going to do next summer?
Susan: I don't know. We, but it's not certain yet.
- 2 Fred: Mike's new flat is all electric – kitchen, heating, everything.
Peter: That in electricity bills.
- 3 Sam: Is Mary coming to see us this week?
Sally: It depends on her work. She if she finishes the project that she's doing.
- 4 Carol: Have Brian and Kim got any children?
Tom: Yes, they have two children, but they in them, because they never talk about them.
- 5 Andrew: Do you see your new neighbours very much?
Sarah: No, they, because they are hardly ever at home.
- 6 Paul: Fred's gone out, hasn't he? Where has he gone?
Ann: I don't know. He or he