

**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. / Actually it isn't (difficult).*      B: *Not really. / 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*.

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 _____.