

Modals of deduction (present)

We can use **MUST**, **MAY**, **MIGHT**, **COULD** and **CAN'T** to express how sure we are about something happening in the present or the future.

MUST

We use **must** when we feel sure about something because there is some kind of evidence.

She must study **very hard** because she gets really good marks.

You have been working all day. You must be very tired.

They **must be rich** because they have an incredible house and four cars.

CAN'T

We use **can't** when we feel sure something is not true.

She **can't study very hard** because she gets really bad marks.

You have been sleeping all day. You **can't be tired**.

They **can't be poor** because they have an incredible house and four cars.

MAY, MIGHT, COULD

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

She might go to the party tomorrow if you ask her.

Peter **could be** at the library. He said he was going to go one of these days.

They **may** win the match. They are quite good.

<https://sites.google.com/site/nutsaboutenglish/grammar/modals/modals-of-deduction>

Exercise 1

Choose the correct modal verbs of deduction for each gap below.

1. Paul is behaving in a very unusual way. I think he _____ again.
a. **can't drink** b. **can be drinking** c. **might be drinking**
2. I think there _____ a mistake in your tax return. You should check it.
a. **can't be** b. **might be** c. **must not be**
3. If Suzan said that, it _____ true. She never lies.
a. **might be** b. **must be** c. **can be**
4. Sorry, but I'm not Connor. You _____ me for someone else.
a. **might be confusing** b. **must confuse** c. **must be confusing**
5. I'm not sure I trust Peter. He _____ the person we think he is.
a. **might not be** b. **can't be** c. **must not be**
6. You have walked for ten hours. You _____ exhausted.
a. **can be** b. **can't be** c. **must be**
7. He _____ his son, they look completely different.
a. **might be** b. **can't be** c. **must not be**
8. There's a bit of traffic, so I _____ arrive in time.
a. **might not** b. **must not** c. **can**
9. He _____ be very proud of you right now. You disappointed him.
a. **must not** b. **can't** c. **might**
10. I wouldn't swim in this river if I were you. It _____ dangerous.
a. **might be** b. **can't be** c. **can be**

<https://test-english.com/grammar-points/b1/modal-verbs-of-deduction/>

Exercise 2

Match the halves to make complete sentences.

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|---|---|
| 1. Do you remember my birthday party last year? | It might be this week or possibly next week. |
| 2. The exam results will be out soon. | It's the red one at the end. You can't miss it! |
| 3. Come in and sit down. | It looks as if it might rain. |
| 4. Whose is this coat? It can't be Paul's. | It's way too small for him. |
| 5. Take this umbrella just in case. | One of them must be wrong. |
| 6. The house isn't hard to find. | You must have some incredible photos. |
| 7. She always gets such good grades at school. | Maybe it's an eagle or it could be a vulture |
| 8. He can't be our teacher! | It's got chicken in it. |
| 9. Samira has flu. We don't know yet, | I'm not sure if you'll need it but they might ask you for ID. |
| 10. What an amazing trip! | You must remember! It was the same day as your graduation. |
| 11. That can't be the vegetarian option. | It can't be Mel's – she's working at home today. |
| 12. Have you got your passport? | but she may need to take the whole week off. |
| 13. Who left their laptop on my desk? | You must be tired after the journey. |
| 14. Your watch says a different time from mine. | He looks about twelve! |
| 15. Look at that bird! | She must work very hard. |

<https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/grammar/intermediate-to-upper-intermediate/modals-deductions-about-the-present>