

# PERFECT MODALS 2 (MODAL + HAVE + V3/ed)

Notes: What is a “perfect modal”?

- Perfect modals are not actually “perfect,” but they are called that because they use a modal verb (in this case, could, should, might/may, must) followed by a perfect tense construction (“have” + past participle).
- Perfect modals are used to talk about past actions.

## PAST MODALS OF DEDUCTION

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### MUST

90-100% sure  
it's TRUE

+ infinitive  
(present meaning)

- She must be in the garden.
- Look at their house. They must be rich.

+ HAVE +  
past participle  
(past meaning)

- She must have been in the garden when I called.

Use CAN'T  
(not MUSTN'T)

- He's just left. He can't be too far. (NOT mustn't be)

### CAN'T

90-100% sure  
NOT true

+ infinitive  
(present meaning)

- She can't be his mother. She's too young.
- He's just left. He can't be too far.

+ HAVE +  
past participle  
(past meaning)

- You can't have seen her. She was at home.

COULDN'T HAVE  
+ past participle  
(also possible)

- You couldn't have seen her.

### MAY MIGHT

30-50% sure  
it's (or not)  
true

+ infinitive  
(present meaning)

- He may/might take the next train.
- She may/might not be home yet.

+ HAVE +  
past participle  
(past meaning)

- He may have taken a different train. He'll call.

→ He might not have heard you.

COULD also possible

→ He could be hurt.

### SHOULD OUGHT TO

expected to  
be true

+ infinitive  
(present meaning)

- He should be/ought to be at work now.
- It shouldn't be/ought not to be too far now.

+ HAVE +  
past participle  
(past meaning)

- You should have packed/ought to have packed your things. You're going to be late.

- You shouldn't have done/ought not to have done that. It was rude.

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Complete the sentences using the verbs in brackets with a past modal verb form.

Old Mr McGraw had been murdered and everybody was wondering who **1**  (do) it. Two police officers were speculating about the murder.

SEBASTIAN: It **2**  (be) Mrs McGraw. I'm totally convinced it was her. She absolutely hated him. She **3**  (use) a kitchen knife as the murder weapon, or maybe an axe from the garden tools.

JESSICA: It **4**  (be) Mrs McGraw. She isn't strong enough to drag the body and put it in the car boot. It **5**  (be) their older son; I would bet all my money it was him. He had motive, because Mr McGraw had disinherited him long ago, and everybody knew they hated each other.

SEBASTIAN: Impossible. It **6**  (be) their older son because he has a plausible alibi. He was fishing with his brother at the time of the crime, he testified.

JESSICA: Then the younger son **7**  (lie) to protect his brother. They **8**  (agree) on an alibi after the murder. If you think about it, they **9**  (plan) the murder together. It's a reasonable possibility. Maybe the younger son was afraid that his father would disinherit him too; they had a difficult relationship.

SEBASTIAN: That makes sense. They killed him so that at least one of them could get the inheritance.

JESSICA: Well, if they wanted to get the money from the inheritance, they **10**  (kill) their father. Because now we'll catch them and they will be in prison and without a penny.



- ⇒ We can use **might/may/could have + past participle** to talk about something that perhaps happened or was true.
- ⇒ We can use **must have + past participle** to say that we are quite sure that something was true or happened in the past.
- ⇒ We can use **can't/couldn't have + past participle** to say that we are quite sure that something did NOT happen or was NOT true in the past.
- ⇒ We can use **should/ought to have + past participle** to talk about a situation that we expected to happen in the past, but it didn't. Or something we expected not to happen and it happened. ⇒ We often use this form to express criticism.