

68 *might, may, must be, can't be*



1 *might (not) and may (not)*

We use *might (not)* when we think something is true or will be true but we aren't sure: 'Who's second?' 'It **might be** the one with the pink cap.'

*Jenny **might be** at home now. Call her.*

*The parcel **might not** arrive tomorrow.*

In more formal English we can use *may (not)* when we aren't sure about something: *Mr Clement **may be** with a client. I'll just check for you.*

*The order **may not** arrive next week.*

NATURAL ENGLISH We don't often form questions with *may* or *might*.

We prefer to use *Do you think ... ?*

*Do you **think** they've got any cheap trainers?*

*Do you **think** the order will arrive this week?*

2 *must be and can't be*

If we are almost certain that something is true, we use *must be*:

*You're very late home. You **must be** tired.*

*I can't find the cat. She **must be** somewhere upstairs.*

If we are almost certain that something is not true, we use *can't be*:

*This ring was very cheap so it **can't be** gold.*

*That boy looks exactly like Sam but it **can't be** him – he's at school.*

Practice

1 Match the sentences.

- 0 There's nothing interesting on TV tonight.
- 1 That man's wearing a white coat.
- 2 I saw Julia at the sports centre yesterday.
- 3 Dario's looking much thinner.
- 4 The director isn't answering her phone.
- 5 My spelling isn't very good.
- 6 The house is completely dark.
- 7 We want to go skiing this winter.
- 8 It's snowing in New York.

- A We might go to Switzerland.
- B I might watch a DVD instead.
- C Everyone must be out.
- D That can't be right. She's in Milan.
- E I might buy a dictionary.
- F He must be on a new diet.
- G Really? It must be colder than here.
- H She may be in a meeting.
- I He might be a doctor.

2 GRAMMAR IN USE Complete the conversation with phrases A–G below.

LIAM I see that Ellen MacArthur has entered another round-the-world yacht race.

STEVE Oh, yes. (0) ... ~~E~~ ... she'll win?

LIAM I think (1) win, but that Frenchman, Francis Joyon, won the last one, didn't he?

STEVE Yes, he did. So (2) be more confident than MacArthur at the moment.

LIAM Mmm, maybe. Do you think he's actually a better sailor than she is?

STEVE No idea – I don't know enough about it. I (3) be faster than her, but she's done some amazing things.

LIAM Mmm. Shall we go to watch the start of the race next weekend?

STEVE I'm not sure. My boss thinks (4) have to work next weekend, so (5) be free.

LIAM OK. (6) go anyway with some other friends. I'll let you know.

A I might C we may all ~~E~~ Do you think G I might not
B he must D she might F think he might



3 Look at the pictures below and make two sentences about each one.

Use **might be**, **must be** or **can't be** and some of the ideas in the box.

children's toys colourful stamps glasses for watching 3-D films mobile clock personal DVD player
something to put on the desk special sunglasses things for warming your hands toy for pets

- 1 They might be They can't be
- 2 They can't be They must be
- 3 It It

