

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

