Past Modals of Deduction

Part 1: The Mystery





The Case of the Missing Keys

"I arrived at Mark's apartment this morning, but he wasn't there. The door was unlocked, and his coffee was still warm on the table. He ***must have left*** *in a hurry. I saw his car keys on the counter, so he* ***can't have driven*** *to work. Maybe he* ***might have gone*** *for a quick jog, or he* ***could have stepped*** *out to help a neighbor. He usually takes his phone everywhere, but it was lying right next to his coffee. He* ***must have forgotten*** *it!"*

Grammar Explanation

We use these structures to guess or deduce things about the past based on current evidence.

Structure	Usage	Certainty
Must + have + Verb - pp	Almost certain something happened.	90-100%
Might / Could + have + Verb - pp	Possible, but not certain.	40-50%
Can't + have + Verb - pp	Certain something was impossible.	90-100% (-)

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Practice Exercises

Exercise 1: Multiple Choice

1. Sarah looks very sad. She (must have / can't have) _____ failed her exam.

2. The streets are wet. It (must have / might have) _____ rained, but I'm not sure.

3. He didn't answer his phone. He (could have / can't have) _____ been asleep.

4. You only ate breakfast an hour ago! You (can't have / must have) _____ been hungry again so soon.

Exercise 2: Sentence Transformation

1. **I'm sure** James stole the cookie.
James _____ the cookie.

2. **It's possible** that they forgot about the meeting.
They _____ about the meeting.

3. **I am certain** she didn't see you at the mall.
She _____ you at the mall.

Exercise 3: Deduce the Situation

Read the situation and write a full sentence using a past modal:

Situation: You see a broken window and a baseball on the floor inside a house.

Deduction:

_____

LIVEWORKSHEETS