

- 1 Look at the photo and read the conversation. Then complete the rules with the bold verbs.



- A: This looks like it **might** be a plant.
 B: Or it **could** be a stick.
 A: No, wait. It **can't** be a stick. It's got eyes.
 B: Yes, and antennae.
 A: And it's got six legs, so it **must** be some sort of insect.

- a We use / + infinitive to talk about things that are possible.
 b We use + infinitive to talk about things that we think are certain.
 c We use + infinitive to talk about things that are impossible.

UNIT 12

MODALS OF PROBABILITY

- Modal verbs do not change form. Modal verbs of probability are always followed by another verb.

I, You, He, She, It, We, They

must be tired.

might die.

could bite.

can't exist.

- To talk about something we think is certain, we use **must** + verb.
*The explorers found two new species. They **must be** very excited. (= I'm certain they're very excited.)
 They've walked through the jungle for four days. They **must feel** tired. (= I'm certain they feel tired.)*

- To talk about something we think is possible, we use **might** or **could** + verb.
*I've never seen an animal like this before. It **could be** / **might be** a new species. (= Perhaps it's a new species.)
 Other new species **could exist** in these mountains. (= Perhaps other new species exist in these mountains.)
 Don't touch it, it **might bite** you. (= Perhaps it will bite you if you touch it.)*
- To talk about something we think is impossible, we use **can't** + verb (**NOT mustn't** + verb).
*I've seen a picture of this animal in an old book, so it **can't be** a new species. (= I'm sure it isn't a new species.)
 He's an intelligent person; he **can't believe** those silly stories! (= I'm sure he doesn't believe those stories.)*

Practice

1 Rewrite the underlined words in the sentences using *must*.

- 1 Jon's gone out without a coat. I'm sure he's cold.
- 2 I put the potatoes in the oven an hour ago. I'm certain they're ready to eat by now.
- 3 I know this parcel is my new phone because I ordered it last week.
- 4 My computer is very slow. I'm sure it's broken.

2 Rewrite the underlined words in the sentences using *might*.

- 1 That cat wants something. Perhaps he's hungry.
- 2 I don't know where my phone is. Perhaps it's in the car.
- 3 It's possible that my teacher speaks three languages. I'm not sure.

3 Look at your answers to Exercise 2. Can you replace *might* with a different modal verb?

4 Rewrite the underlined words in the sentences using *can't*.

- 1 This fish smells terrible. I'm certain it isn't fresh.
- 2 I don't believe that coat belongs to you. It's much too small.
- 3 It's not possible that you feel tired. You've been asleep for twelve hours!

5 Choose the correct verbs.

Liz has come to visit Becca on her birthday.

Becca: Hi, Liz, come in. I'm having a great day. I've got lots of cards and some great presents. But what's this parcel? I didn't notice it before. Oh dear, there's no card with it.

Liz: Is it from your sister?

Becca: It ¹ *can't be* / *must be* from her – I've already opened her present.

Liz: Is it from your parents?

Becca: No, it ² *can't be* / *could be* from them either because they're giving me a new bike. We're going to get it later.

Liz: Is it from your grandparents?

Becca: It ³ *could be* / *must be* from them, I guess. They usually send me something, but I don't know how it got here.

Liz: Well, the card ⁴ *might be* / *can't be* inside.

Becca: Yes, but it's a strange shape. I wonder what it is. The wrapping paper is really beautiful. It ⁵ *must be* / *can't be* something special.

Liz: It's not very big. It ⁶ *could be* / *must be* a new phone. Did you ask for one?

Becca: No. Anyway, it's hard at one end and softer at the other, so it ⁷ *can't be* / *might be* a phone. OK, I'm going to open it. Oh, wow, it's some of those brushes I saw in the art shop last week! And here's the card. It says 'Love from Liz!' I didn't see you bring the parcel in.

Liz: Well, I knew you wanted some and so I thought they ⁸ *could be* / *must be* a good present.

Becca: They're perfect, thank you so much!

2 Choose the correct option.

-  1 That bird *could* / *can't* be a penguin. It flew onto the roof.
- 2 Our dog hasn't moved all day. He *could* / *can't* be ill.
- 3 Be careful. I can hear a mosquito. It *might* / *must* bite you.
- 4 Something is eating food from the bins. There aren't any wolves around here, but it *can't* / *could* be a fox.
- 5 It's big and it's got brown fur. It *can't* / *might* be a bear.
- 6 The cat's asleep. She *can't* / *must* be sleepy today.
- 7 It's got four legs, so it *could* / *can't* be a snake.
- 8 I can hear a voice speaking, but there's nobody here. It *must* / *can't* be that parrot!

 **3** Listen to sounds 1–8. In groups, discuss what the sounds *can't*, *might* or *must* be.

4 Look at the photos and discuss what animals they *can't*, *might* or *must* be.



A: *It has some red on it, so it can't be a tiger.*

B: *It could be a bird ...*

A: *Oh, I know. It must be a ... !*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.



1 Complete the conversation with *might*, *must*, *can't* or *could*.

A: What's that? Oh, I know, it ¹ _____ be a big cat.

B: Mm, I don't think so. It ² _____ be an elephant because it's too small.

A: Right, but it's an African animal. It ³ _____ be a rhino but it's the wrong colour.

B: I know! It ⁴ _____ be a giraffe – look at its skin!

2 Choose the correct answer.

- 1 I _____ watch a programme about animals tonight.
a might b can't
- 2 That _____ be the longest snake I've ever seen!
a can't b must
- 3 Phil _____ be ill because he isn't at school today.
a might b can't
- 4 It _____ be a parrot. It's the wrong colour!
a can't b must
- 5 I know you've lost your book. _____ this be it?
a Can't b Could
- 6 You _____ be really excited – you have tickets for your favourite band!
a must b could
- 7 Taylor _____ call me later, but she's not sure.
a must b might
- 8 I'm tired. It _____ be time for bed.
a must b can't

3 Complete the sentences with the correct modal verb. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

- 1 I think it _____ rain today – look at the sky.
- 2 This _____ be for me – I don't like nature magazines.
- 3 You _____ be really happy with your new pet dog!
- 4 That animal _____ bite you – watch out!
- 5 It looks like a dog, but it lives in the forest. It _____ be a wolf.
- 6 Everyone's wearing hats and coats. It _____ be very cold.
- 7 I can't find my books, but they _____ be at school.
- 8 It _____ be a fox. It's the size of a small horse!

4 Complete the sentences with the correct modal verb. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

A: What are you reading? And what is that?

B: It's an amazing animal. It ¹ _____ be very clever to do the things it does.

A: Right! It ² _____ be from Europe! Look at those trees and the background!

B: No, I think it ³ _____ be from South America somewhere. I haven't finished reading it yet!

A: Well, I ⁴ _____ do my 'wonderful animals' project about this! Can I have the magazine?

5 Choose the correct sentence in each pair.



1 a I think this can be difficult to do.

b I think this might be difficult to do.

2 a They must be beautiful!

b They might to be beautiful!

3 a I thought that you might want to come to my house to play the game with me.

b I thought that you want to come to my house to play the game with me.

4 a She's smiling. She must be so pleased with her new pet rabbit.

b She's smiling. She can't be pleased with her new pet rabbit

5 a I thought that the exhibition about the future of your city must be very interesting.

b I thought that the exhibition about the future of your city might be very interesting.

6 a There's a new job available at the café. It could be just what you're looking for.

b There's a new job available at the café. It must be just what you're looking for.