

Degrees of certainty range from very certain to uncertain.

Very certain: To show that you think something was probable in the past, use ***must have***, ***must not have***, ***can't have***, or ***couldn't have***.

Jake had a stomachache last night after dinner. He ***must have*** eaten too much.

Sofia was at a movie with me last night. You ***couldn't have*** seen her at the mall!

Uncertain: To show that you think something was possible in the past, use ***could have***, ***may have***, ***might have***, ***may not have***, or ***might not have***.

Jun Ho is usually here by now. He ***could*** / ***may*** / ***might*** have missed the bus this morning.

Tanya was supposed to meet me before school. She ***may*** / ***might not have*** gotten the message.

To give opinions or advice, there are a greater number of modals available for talking about the present or future than there are for the past.

Present or future: Use ***must (not)***, ***have to***, ***have got to***, ***had better (not)***, or ***should (not)***.

Parents ***have got to*** monitor the shows their children watch.

The kids ***had better not*** spend so much time indoors playing computer games.

Past: Use ***should (not) have***.

I ***should have*** listened to the advice my parents gave me about having a healthy lifestyle.

We ***should not have*** ignored the scientists' warnings about global warming.

Choose the correct answer to complete the sentence.

1. A: Kimberly didn't come to the party last night. I wonder why.
B: I'm not sure. She ***could have*** / ***should have*** been sick, I guess.
2. A: Where's my umbrella? It was right here by the door.
B: Oh, I'm sorry, Paul. My sister ***couldn't have*** / ***must have*** taken it.
3. A: I got a terrible cramp in my leg while I was jogging yesterday.
B: Hmm. You ***must not have*** / ***may have*** done your stretches properly first.
4. A: I had to ask Natalie twice to turn down the TV.
B: She ***might not have*** / ***must have*** heard you the first time.
5. A: They said the meeting was at 7:30, but it had already started when I got there.
B: They told me 7:00. You ***can't have*** / ***must have*** been told the wrong time.
6. A: Marnie wasn't at work yesterday. Was she sick?
B: Well, she ***couldn't have*** / ***must have*** been too sick. I saw her at the park.
7. A: I only used your camera to take a few pictures. I don't see why you're so upset.
B: Well, you ***couldn't have*** / ***shouldn't have*** been using it without my permission.
8. A: Sorry I'm late. We were playing baseball, and I didn't notice the time.
B: You ***may not have*** / ***couldn't have*** been doing that. It's been dark for an hour!