

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!