

MODALS in PAST



Context: Yesterday, I was supposed to meet my friend at the cafe, but I didn't see her there. She **might (30%) have left** early because she had another appointment.

1. **Context:** I can't find my phone anywhere in the house. I **may (50%) have misplaced** it during the party last night.

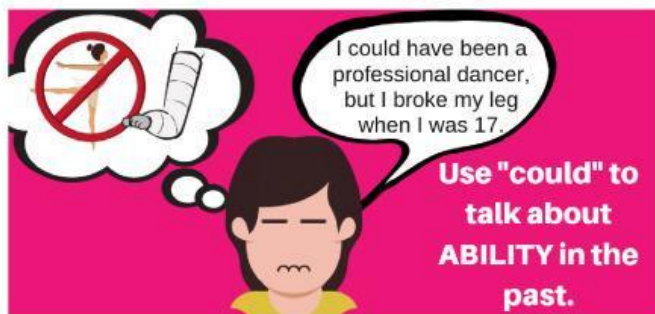
2. **Context:** The cake that I baked doesn't taste as sweet as it usually does. I **might (30%) have forgotten** to add sugar.
3. **Context:** I haven't received my order yet, even though the tracking status shows it was delivered yesterday. **Sentence:** The mailman **may (50%) have delivered** the package to the wrong address.

Complete the sentences with may / might have + past participle (3rd form).

1. I saw a beautiful dress in the store yesterday, but today it's gone. Someone _____ (**buy**) it.
2. The house is unusually clean today. My roommate _____ (**do**) the cleaning while I was out.
3. I can't find my dog anywhere in the house. He _____ (**go**) out through the open gate.
4. There were cookies on the table, but now there's only an empty plate. My brother _____ (**eat**) them.
5. She _____ (**write**) the letter last night. Because I saw her sitting at the desk with a pen and paper.
- 1) **Question:** Do you think John _____ (**beat**) the high score in the game?
 - a. **Answer:** Yes, he's been practicing a lot lately, so he **might have beaten** the high score.
 - b. **Answer:** No, he hasn't been playing much lately, so he **might not have beaten** the high score.
- 2) **Question:** Do you think she _____ (**be**) at the party last night?
 - a. **Answer:** I'm not sure, but she mentioned something about going to a party, so she **may have been** there.
 - b. **Answer:** I'm not sure, but she didn't mention anything about going to a party, so she **may not have been** there.
- 3) **Question:** Do you think they _____ (**see**) the movie already?

*picture source: <https://englishclassviaskype.com/blog/how-to-learn-english/past-modal-verbs/>

- a. **Answer:** They love going to the cinema, so they **might have seen** it.
- b. **Answer:** They haven't been to the cinema recently, so they **might not have seen** it.
- 4) **Question:** Do you think he _____ (**eat**) the last piece of cake?
- a. **Answer:** Knowing his love for cake, he **may have eaten** it.
- b. **Answer:** He's been on a diet recently, so he **may not have eaten** it.
- 5) **Question:** Do you think she _____ (**do**) her homework already?
- a. **Answer:** She's very responsible, so she **might have done** her homework by now.
- b. **Answer:** She's been very busy lately, so she **might not have done** her homework yet.



IMPOSSIBILITY:

- Context:** You used to be a professional weightlifter but had to retire due to an injury. **Could you have broken** the weightlifting record in your prime?

Affirmative: Yes, I **could have broken** the weightlifting record in my prime if I hadn't been injured.

Negative: No, I **couldn't have broken** the weightlifting record in my prime because there were stronger competitors.
- Context:** You were once a skilled programmer but haven't coded in years. **Could you have done** the complex coding task a few years ago?

Affirmative: Yes, I **could've done** the complex coding task a few years ago when I was actively programming.

Negative: No, I **couldn't have done** the complex coding task a few years ago because it requires knowledge of a programming language I didn't learn.
- Context:** You were once a competitive swimmer but had to stop due to health issues. **Could you have been** a champion swimmer if you had continued training?

Affirmative: Yes, I _____ (**be**) a champion swimmer if I had continued training and hadn't developed health issues.

Negative: No, I _____ (**be**) a champion swimmer even if I had continued training because the competition was too strong.
- Context:** You used to be fluent in French but haven't spoken it in years. **Could you have spoken** French fluently at the international conference five years ago?

*picture source: <https://englishclassviaskype.com/blog/how-to-learn-english/past-modal-verbs/>

Affirmative: Yes, I _____ (**speak**) French fluently at the international conference five years ago when my French was better.

Negative: No, I _____ (**speak**) French fluently at the international conference five years ago because I was already losing my fluency.

5. **Context:** You used to be an expert in ancient history but have since switched fields. **Could you have known** the answer to the complex history question when you were studying ancient history?

Affirmative: Yes, I _____ (**know**) the answer to the complex history question when I was studying ancient history.

Negative: No, I _____ (**know**) the answer to the complex history question when I was studying ancient history because it was outside my area of expertise.



Criticism:

1. **Context:** The meeting didn't go as well as expected. Could the agenda **have been** better organized?

Affirmative Answer: Yes, it **could have been** better organized. That might have made the meeting more productive.

Negative Answer: No, the organization wasn't the issue. The participants **could have been** more prepared.

2. **Context:** The project was completed, but the result was not up to the mark. Could we **have done** a better job if we had more time?

Affirmative Answer: Yes, we **could've done** a better job with more time. The deadline was quite tight.

***Negative Answer:** No, more time wouldn't have made a difference. We **could have done** a better job if we had clearer instructions.

3. **Context:** The essay received a lower grade than expected. Could I **have written** a stronger conclusion?

Affirmative Answer: Yes, you _____ (**write**) a stronger conclusion. That might have improved your grade.

Negative Answer: No, the conclusion wasn't the issue. You **could have written** a more detailed analysis in the body of the essay.

4. **Context:** The quiz was tougher than expected. _____ I _____ (**know**) the answers if I had studied more?

Affirmative Answer: Yes, you **could have known** the answers with more study. Preparation is key.

Negative Answer: No, even with more study, you _____ **(know)** the answers. The questions were unusually difficult.



MUST HAVE = only in affirmative sentences (+ positive sentence).

1. **Context:** The project was not completed on time. Could they **have done** something wrong in their planning?

Affirmative Answer: Yes, they **must have done** something wrong, perhaps they underestimated the time required.

Negative Answer: No, they **couldn't have done** anything wrong. The delay could be due to unforeseen circumstances.

2. **Context:** The car won't start. Could you **have had** the keys with you?

Affirmative Answer: Yes, I **must have had** the keys. I drove the car yesterday.

Negative Answer: No, I **couldn't have had** the keys. I might have left them at the office.

3. **Context:** The cake didn't turn out as expected. Could you **have made** a mistake in the recipe?

Affirmative Answer: Yes, I _____ **(make)** a mistake. Perhaps I mixed up the ingredients.

Negative Answer: No, I _____ **(make)** a mistake. I followed the recipe exactly.

4. **Context:** The movie was not as good as the reviews suggested. Is it possible that we might **have seen** a different movie?

Affirmative Answer: Yes, we _____ **(see)** a different movie. The one we saw didn't match the reviews.

Negative Answer: No, we _____ **(see)** a different movie. The name of the movie and the cast is the same one in reviews.

5. **Context:** The food at the restaurant was not up to the mark. Could / might they **have eaten** something different than us?

*picture source: <https://englishclassviaskype.com/blog/how-to-learn-english/past-modal-verbs/>

Affirmative Answer: Yes, they _____ (eat) something different. Their experience was much better.

Negative Answer: No, they _____ (eat) something different. They ordered the same food as we did.



!!! It is possible, although not very common, to ask a question using the past of should. In this case, the speaker is asking for advice about a missed opportunity or possible mistake.!!!!

- Context:** Yesterday was your best friend's birthday. You both have been friends since childhood and share a tradition of baking a cake for each other on birthdays.
 - Question:** Should I have made a cake for your best friend's birthday?
 - Affirmative Answer:** Yes, you should have made a cake for your best friend's birthday to keep up with the tradition.
 - Negative Answer:** No, you should not have made a cake for your best friend's birthday if they specifically asked you not to.
- Context:** You went to a new restaurant last night. You love trying new cuisines and dishes, but you also have a sensitive stomach.
 - Question:** Should I have eaten the spicy dish at the new restaurant?
 - Affirmative Answer:** Yes, you should've eaten the spicy dish at the new restaurant if you wanted to try something new.
 - Negative Answer:** No, you shouldn't have eaten the spicy dish at the new restaurant if you were worried about your sensitive stomach.
- Context:** You were at a party last weekend. You enjoy socializing and having a good time, but you also had an important meeting the next morning.
 - Question:** _____ I _____ (drink) less at the party?
 - Affirmative Answer:** Yes, you _____ (drink) less at the party to be fresh for the meeting.

*picture source: <https://englishclassviaskype.com/blog/how-to-learn-english/past-modal-verbs/>

- **Negative Answer:** No, you _____ (drink) less at the party if you felt comfortable and were able to handle your responsibilities.
4. **Context:** There was a rare meteor shower last night. You have a keen interest in astronomy, but it was a cloudy night.
- **Question:** Should I have seen the meteor shower last night?
 - **Affirmative Answer:** Yes, you _____ (see) the meteor shower last night as it was a rare event.
 - **Negative Answer:** No, you _____ (see) the meteor shower last night if the weather conditions were not favourable.
5. **Context:** You were feeling unwell this morning. You had a lot of work to do, but your health was deteriorating.
- **Question:** Should I have had some rest in the morning?
 - **Affirmative Answer:** Yes, you _____ (have) some rest in the morning to recover faster.
 - **Negative Answer:** No, you _____ (have) some rest in the morning if you felt that you could manage the work without affecting your health.



1. **Context:** You saw a beautiful painting at an auction last week. You've been collecting art for a few years and this painting would have been a perfect addition to your collection.
- **Question:** Would you have bought the painting if it was cheaper?
 - **Affirmative Answer:** Yes, I **would have bought** the painting if it was cheaper, considering my passion for art collection.
 - **Negative Answer:** No, I **would not have bought** the painting even if it was cheaper, if it didn't align with my taste in art.
2. **Context:** You missed your train this morning. You usually leave home at 7:30 AM to catch the 8:00 AM train to work.
- **Question:** Would you have caught the train if you had left home earlier?

*picture source: <https://englishclassviaskype.com/blog/how-to-learn-english/past-modal-verbs/>

- **Affirmative Answer:** Yes, I **would've caught** the train if I had left home earlier, ensuring I reach work on time.
 - **Negative Answer:** No, I **wouldn't have caught** the train even if I had left home earlier, if there were other unforeseen delays.
3. **Context:** You met a Spanish-speaking person at a conference. You've been wanting to practice your Spanish skills.
- **Question:** _____ you _____ (speak) to the person in Spanish if you knew the language?
 - **Affirmative Answer:** Yes, I _____ (speak) to the person in Spanish if I knew the language, to practice and improve my skills.
 - **Negative Answer:** No, I _____ (speak) to the person in Spanish even if I knew the language, if the conversation required professional or technical vocabulary that I'm not comfortable with.
4. **Context:** You were offered a new type of cocktail at a party. You enjoy trying new drinks, but you were the designated driver that night.
- **Question:** _____ (drink) the cocktail if you weren't driving?
 - **Affirmative Answer:** Yes, I _____ (drink) the cocktail if I wasn't driving, to experience the new flavour.
 - **Negative Answer:** No, I _____ (drink) the cocktail even if I wasn't driving, if I didn't prefer its ingredients.
5. **Context:** You had a business idea a few years ago. You've always dreamed of starting your own company.
- **Question:** _____ (begin) the business if you had the resources?
 - **Affirmative Answer:** Yes, I _____ (begin) the business if I had the resources, to realize my dream of entrepreneurship.
 - **Negative Answer:** No, I _____ (begin) the business even if I had the resources, if I assessed the market conditions to be unfavourable.



Modals in Past

Modal + have + participle



Modal	Concept	Example
Would have	Past unreal action	If I had guessed the future, I would have taken some precautions against what would happen.
Could have	Past unreal ability	He could have taken the flight.
May have	Past unreal possibility	We may have passed the math exam, but it was in Spanish.
Might have	Past unreal small probability	You might have sold the car, if you really needed the Money.
Should have	Past unreal recommendation	You should have listened to the teacher.
Must have	Past unreal assumption	We must have been crazy!

www.englishstudyhere.com

Complete the sentences with the phrases below.

can't have could have might not have must have should have shouldn't have

- 1 I _____ used my satnav. This map is really old and now I'm completely lost.
- 2 Oh look, that's Jon's phone on the desk. He _____ forgotten it.
- 3 My computer isn't working. I'm not sure why, but I _____ downloaded some malware when I clicked on that link.
- 4 He _____ sent this text message. He hasn't got a phone.
- 5 I _____ tried to update my phone software. I did it last night and now my phone doesn't work at all.
- 6 You _____ deleted that document. Perhaps you saved it to a different folder.

Complete the dialogue with modal verbs and correct verb form.

Last weekend, we decided to go on a hiking trip. On our way, I asked my friend, "Could we have taken a wrong turn back there?" We _____ (miss) the signpost. We _____ lost (be / 100% sure) . I suggested that we _____ (ask / should) for directions at the last gas station.

Back on our trip, the weather started to change. " _____ (bring- brought / we/ should) an umbrella?" I wondered aloud. It _____ (rain, small possibility),

*picture source: <https://englishclassviaskype.com/blog/how-to-learn-english/past-modal-verbs/>

and we _____ (stay/ possibility) dry. But, we _____ (forget – forgotten / 100% sure) to check the weather forecast. Despite these minor setbacks, we enjoyed our adventurous day.

2 Complete the text with the correct past modal form of the verbs in brackets.

Kim My laptop is missing! It's got all my homework on it!

Steve OK, don't panic. When did you last have it?

Kim Well, it was in my bag when I was on the train yesterday afternoon. But when I got off the train, it wasn't there.

Steve Someone on the train ¹_____ (must / steal) it! Who was sitting next to you?

Kim An elderly lady. But she ²_____ (can't / take) the laptop. She got off the train with me, and she didn't have any luggage.

Steve It ³_____ (might / fall) out of your bag. Was the bag closed?

Kim No, it wasn't.

Steve Well, that's not good. You ⁴_____ (shouldn't / leave) your bag open.

Kim Yes, well, I know that now.

Steve Have you called the train company? They ⁵_____ (could / find) it.

Kim No, I haven't called them yet.

Steve Well, you ⁶_____ (should / call) them first of all!

Kim Actually, I've just remembered something. I ⁷_____ (might / not / lose) my laptop. In fact, I ⁸_____ (may / forget) to put it in my bag before I got onto the train.

Steve So where is it?

Kim Well, I ⁹_____ (must / leave) it at my aunt's house. That's where I was yesterday morning.

Steve Mystery solved!

SPEAKING Work in pairs. Read about these situations. Then talk about what might / could / can't / must have happened.

- Natasha was crying last night after a long phone call.
- Will was listening to his MP3 player on the beach yesterday. Now it doesn't work.
- Marie hasn't replied to any of her emails for over a week.
- George is missing and his laptop and phone have also disappeared.

Natasha must have had an argument with her boyfriend.

I think she might have heard some bad news about a relative.

Complete the dialogue with modal verbs and correct verb form.

Person A: Do you remember when people **might have** only dreamed about today's technology?

Person B: Yes, they _____ (**think***) about devices that make life easier, but they _____ (predict/ not) how advanced technology would become.

Person A: True, I think they _____ (imagine) a device for storing information.

Person B: And the internet! I'd say that people _____ (**see***) how it would change everything. But they _____ (predict) problems like data privacy and misinformation.

Person A: Yes, they _____ (**know***) that new technology brings new challenges. I believe we _____ (ignore / not) these potential risks.

Person B: Absolutely. In my opinion, we learn to address these challenges as we continue to innovate.

*picture source: <https://englishclassviaskype.com/blog/how-to-learn-english/past-modal-verbs/>