Modals of Possibility

MUST

90 - 100%
(sure it's true)

She ***must be*** in the garden. (=I'm sure she is in the garden)

They **must know** each other.

MAY/MIGHT (NOT)

30 - 50%
(maybe true)

He may/might be be late.

30 - 50%
(maybe NOT true)

He may/might NOT remember who you are (=Maybe he does NOT remember)

CAN'T

90 - 100%
(sure NOT true)

She **can't be** his mother. (=I'm sure she is NOT his mom)

He just left.
He **can't be** too far.

Use can't (NOT mustn't)

✗ He's just left. He mustn't be too far.
✓ He's just left. He can't be too far.

Use may/might (NOT can)

✗ He isn't here. He can be at home.
✓ He isn't here. He might be at home.

+ be + -ing verb

To speculate about actions in progress

They are in Ibiza. They **must be having** a great time.

You are always hungry. I think that you **might not be eating** enough.

New study suggests that air pollution **may be making** people unhappy.

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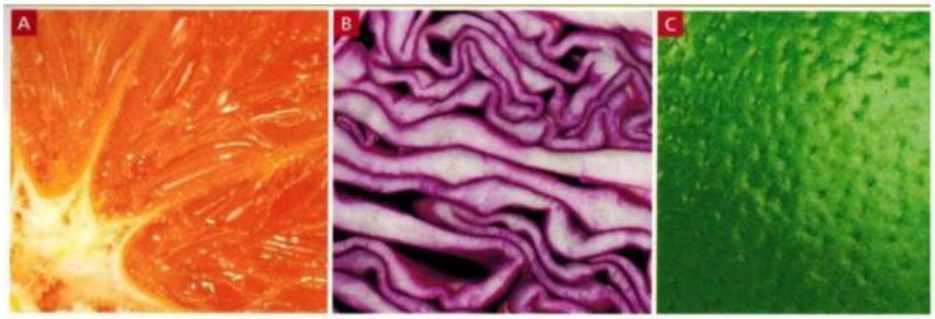
LIVEWORKSHEETS



1. Look at the photos. What do you think they are.

2. Listen to the conversation and write the words you hear in the gaps.

A It _____ be anything like an apple because they don't have that kind of middle.

B It _____ be a lemon. They look like that in the centre.

C It _____ be an orange. It's the right shape for an orange.

3. Match the modals of possibility from Activity 2 to their meanings A - C. What verb form comes after each modal verb? _____

A I'm sure it is.	1. Could
B. It's possible.	2. Must
C. I'm sure is not.	3. Can't

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☺ + modal verb + verb in infinitive + C

4. Complete the sentences using **must**, **might/could** or **can't** + a form of the verb be or have

1 He _____ vegetarian because I saw him eating a steak.

2. It _____ time to go! All the others have left.

3. They _____ international food; but probably not. It's a local restaurant.

4. The restaurant _____ a table tonight if they're not busy.

5. This milk _____ past it's use-by date. I only bought it this morning.

6. There _____ a mistake on this bill. I didn't order champagne!

LANGUAGE TIP

Could, *might* and *may* can also be used to say that something is possible in the future.

For example: I might be late tonight.

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