

## Tricky Fine Distinctions Among Modal Verbs Exercise

Complete the 12 sentences below. Choose the best answer for each one. Some sentences have two correct answers. Choose both.

1. Given the power cut, the server ..... offline at midnight, so the missing logs are no surprise.

could go

must have gone

may go

2. You ..... have told me you were resigning in front of the whole team. A private word would have done.

needn't

shouldn't

might not

3. I ..... finish the report tonight, but I am not promising. It depends on how long the client call runs.

shall

must

might

4. If you ..... interrupt, at least wait until she has finished her sentence.

may

will

can

5. You ..... have brought a gift, but it was a thoughtful touch.

needn't

mustn't

couldn't

6. The committee ..... approve the merger, but only if the regulator signs off first.

must

should

might

7. He ..... be at the office. His car is outside and the lights are on.

can

may

must

8. I ..... ask you to keep this confidential. The investigation is still ongoing.

must

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can

may

9. She ..... have missed the email. I watched her open it and reply immediately.

mustn't

can't

might not

10. The witness ..... have been lying, but the timeline still checks out.

must

might

shall

11. To be admitted, applicants ..... submit either a portfolio or a published paper, not both.

Select 2 answers.

should

must

have to

12. You ..... leave now if you like. The meeting has finished and no one needs you.

Select 2 answers.

can

may

must

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### Answers

Given the power cut, the server must have gone offline at midnight, so the missing logs are no surprise.

You shouldn't have told me you were resigning in front of the whole team. A private word would have done.

I might finish the report tonight, but I am not promising. It depends on how long the client call runs. If you will interrupt, at least wait until she has finished her sentence.

You needn't have brought a gift, but it was a thoughtful touch.

The committee might approve the merger, but only if the regulator signs off first.

He must be at the office. His car is outside and the lights are on.

I may ask you to keep this confidential. The investigation is still ongoing.

She can't have missed the email. I watched her open it and reply immediately.

The witness might have been lying, but the timeline still checks out.

To be admitted, applicants must submit either a portfolio or a published paper, not both.

To be admitted, applicants have to submit either a portfolio or a published paper, not both.

You can leave now if you like. The meeting has finished and no one needs you.

You may leave now if you like. The meeting has finished and no one needs you.