

Modals of Deduction and Speculation Practice

Modals of deduction and speculation are used to express a degree of certainty about a particular situation. They are constructed as follows:

For present situations	For past situations
(modal + infinitive) Mario drives a nice car. He must be rich.	(modal + have + participle) Ali is tired. He might have had a late night.

A. Match the sentences and then label them 'past' or 'present' according to the structure they use.

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| 1. Pedro is sneezing a lot. | a. He must have gone home. |
| 2. Someone ate all the biscuits. | b. He's on holiday in Spain. |
| 3. That can't be Gino and Lola's car. | c. I think she might be tired. |
| 4. Jan's hair looks a bit darker | d. I may have deleted it. |
| 5. His coat isn't in the office. | e. I forgot to feed it this morning. |
| 6. Little Anna is grumpy today. | f. He may have an allergy. |
| 7. I can't find the file anywhere. | g. I think she might have dyed it. |
| 8. The dog must be starving. | h. It could have been Tom. |
| 9. The computer's doing strange things. | i. Their car is blue. |
| 10. It can't have been Lee that you saw. | j. It could have a virus. |

B. Place the modal verbs from Exercise A in the table according to their function.

To express possibility that something is true	To express certainty that something is true	To express certainty that something isn't true

C. Underline the correct modal verb phrase in the sentences below.

- You *can't be* / *can't have been* a grandmother. You look far too young.
- He didn't come to the meeting. He *might have forgotten* / *might forget* about it.
- Sid isn't answering his phone. He *might leave* / *might have left* it at home.
- I never told him that. He *must have misunderstood* / *can't have misunderstood* me.
- It *can't have been* / *may have been* Paolo that ate all the crisps. He hates salty food.
- Sara didn't have any cake. She *could be* / *could have been* on a diet.

D. Complete the sentences with a modal verb in the present or past form, plus the verb in brackets

- Jack did really well in the exam. He (study) very hard.
- He (forget) about the party! I reminded him about it several times.
- The children are yawning. I think they (be) getting bored.
- Oh gosh! It's dark already. It (be) later than I thought it was.
- It (be) more than five degrees in here. It feels like a fridge.
- I'm not sure what bit me. It (be) an ant.
- That sauce was very spicy. The chef (put) a lot of chilli in it.
- We (be) out of bread already! I bought two loaves yesterday.

E. Complete the gaps by choosing matching sentences from the box and rewriting them using a modal verb. The original meanings must be kept the same.

a. I'm quite certain they're twins.	e. It is possible that it belongs to Jean.
b. I'm quite certain she's not married.	f. It is possible that she was baking.
c. It's possible that I left them in the car.	g. There's no way she's gone home.
d. I'm pretty sure he's in love.	h. I'm pretty sure he had a nightmare.

- Ann answered the door with flour in her hair.
- Her car is still here.
- She's not wearing a ring.
- I can't find my keys.
- Joe's very cheerful these days.
- The child woke up screaming.
- I found an earring on the floor.
- They're practically identical.

F. With a partner, use modals of deduction and speculation to give reasons for the situations below. Try and think of five reasons for each.

- You arrived at school this morning to find water all over the classroom floor.
- You've been calling your friend all morning, but he hasn't picked up the phone.
- Your neighbour's dog was barking all night long.