Modal Verbs of Speculation and Deduction

TModal verbs of speculation and deduction are used to express degrees of certainty or uncertainty about a past, present, or future situation. They indicate the speaker's belief, opinion, or judgment regarding the likelihood of something happening or being true. Some common modal verbs used for speculation and deduction include "**must**," "**might**," "**may**," "**could**," "**can't**," and "**should**." Here's a detailed explanation of each:

Must:

Usage: It indicates a high degree of certainty or strong belief that something is true or likely to happen.
Example:

- "She must be at home by now." **(High probability that she is at home.)**

Might/May:

Usage: It indicates a possibility or likelihood of something happening, but with less certainty than "must."
Example:

- "He might/may have forgotten about the meeting." **(There is a possibility that he forgot.)**

Could:

Usage: It suggests a possibility, often used when considering several options or when there is uncertainty.
Example:

- "It could rain later, so bring an umbrella." **(There is a possibility of rain.)**

Can't:

Usage: It indicates a strong belief that something is not true or unlikely to happen.
Example:

- "She can't have finished all her homework already." **(It's unlikely that she finished.)**

Should:

Usage: It suggests a strong likelihood or expectation that something is true based on logical reasoning or previous experience.

- **Example:** "He should be here by now." **(Based on the expected time frame, he is expected to be here.)**

Speculation in the Past:

To speculate about past events, modal verbs are followed by a perfect infinitive (e.g., "**must have**," "**might have**," "**could have**").
Example:

- "She must have missed the train" (She missed the train, that's why she's late).

Deduction in the Present and Future:

Modal verbs of speculation and deduction can be used to make deductions about present or future situations based on evidence or logical reasoning.
Example:

- "He can't be at work because his car is still in the driveway" **(It's unlikely that he's at work because his car is here)**.



Modal Verbs of Speculation and Deduction Exercise 1:

Choose the correct answer.

1. She _____ be at home, but I'm not sure.
a) must
b) can't
c) might

2. The lights are off, so they _____ gone out.
a) must have
b) can't have
c) might have

3. He _____ be the thief; he was with me the whole time.
a) can't
b) must
c) might

4. He speaks so many languages; he _____ very intelligent.
a) must be
b) can't be
c) might be

5. They didn't answer the phone; they _____ seen the caller ID.
a) should have
b) can't have
c) must have

6. She _____ come to the party, but she's not sure yet.
a) may
b) must
c) can't

7. You _____ mistaken him for his twin brother; they look exactly alike.
a) musn't have
b) can't have
c) must have

8. This _____ be the right address! There's no building here.
a) can't
b) must
c) should

9. He _____ forgotten about our meeting. He's usually on time.
a) might have
b) can't have
c) should have

10. You _____ be joking! That can't be true.
a) might
b) can't
c) must

Modal Verbs of Speculation and Deduction Exercise 2:

Complete the sentences/questions with the correct modal verb of speculation and deduction in the correct form.

1. You _____ be serious about quitting your job! (can't)

2. They _____ be renovating their house; I've seen construction workers there.

3. They _____ be getting married soon; I saw a wedding planner leaving their house. (might)

4. He _____ be feeling well if he skipped the meeting today. (might not)

5. She _____ be coming to the party since she hasn't RSVP'd yet. (might not)

6. He left a long time ago, so he _____ arrive on time. I'd be surprised if he didn't.

7. I _____ taken the job, but I turned it down in the end. It wasn't quite right.

8. I'm going to bring an umbrella because it ____ rain later.

9. I can't work like this! There _____ be a better way, surely.

10. There's only one cookie left. The kids _____ eaten the rest of them.



Modal verbs of speculation and deduction: answer key

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Where two or more answers are given, any of them is correct.

Exercise 1

1. c) might
2. a) must have
3. a) can't
4. a) must be
5. c) must have
6. a) may
7. c) must have
8. a) can't
9. a) might have
10. c) must

Exercise 2

1. can't
2. must
3. must / might
4. might not / may not
5. might not / may not
6. should
7. could have
8. might / may
9. must
10. must have