

MUST, MIGHT & CAN'T: DEDUCTION

B1 | Teens / Adults | Grammar Practice | 35-45 minutes

Learn and practise | Use evidence to make present-time deductions.

1. READ: A light upstairs

Read the conversation. Notice the bold grammar and how the speakers use it.

Tess: There's a light on in the office. Someone **must be** working late.

Mo: It **might be** the cleaner. I saw her van outside.

Tess: Is it Ben? He said he had a deadline.

Mo: It **can't be** Ben. He's on a flight to Madrid right now.

Tess: Then let's leave the papers at reception.

Mo: Good idea. Whoever's upstairs **must be** busy - they haven't answered the bell.

2. GRAMMAR: Strong and uncertain conclusions

Must means a strong positive deduction; can't means a strong negative one; might means possible.

Use / form	Pattern	Example
Very likely	must + base verb	She must be busy.
Possible	might / may / could + verb	It might be the cleaner.
Not possible	can't + base verb	It can't be Ben.

Use evidence, not just a personal opinion.

Must be here is a conclusion, not a rule. **Can't be** is not lack of ability.

For an uncertain negative, use might not: He might not be at home.

A. CHOOSE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

- Her coat is here. She must be / being nearby.
- It can't / must be Jo: she's abroad.
- I'm not sure. It might / must be the cleaner.
- He must have / has the key; he opened the door.
- That blue bag can't / might be mine: mine is red.
- They may be / are upstairs.
- She must knows / know the code.
- He might not be / isn't home yet.

Read each answer aloud. Explain which meaning or time clue helped you.

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Use it | Complete a context, write sentences and speak with a partner.

B. COMPLETE: Using clues

Use the modal in brackets with the base form of the verb.

1. The cake is still warm. It _____ (must / be) fresh.
2. This _____ (can't / be) my cup; mine has a blue handle.
3. I'm not sure who's outside. It _____ (might / be) Jo.
4. He opened the safe. He _____ (must / know) the code.
5. She's in Tokyo now. She _____ (can't / be) at this meeting.
6. The lights are off. They _____ (might / not / be) home.

C. CHANGE THE SENTENCES

1-2: Rewrite as a strong deduction with must.

Example: I'm sure she's tired. **She must be tired.**

1. I'm sure he knows the answer.
2. I'm sure they're hungry.

3-4: Rewrite as a strong negative deduction with can't. Example: I'm sure it isn't his. **It can't be his.**

3. I'm sure this isn't the right road.
4. I'm sure she isn't asleep.

D. WRITE ABOUT YOU

Write three deductions about an imagined scene. Give evidence for each conclusion.

Example: **The floor is wet. Someone must be cleaning. That coat can't be mine; mine is green.**

E. SPEAK WITH A PARTNER

Describe clues in a mystery scene. Your partner suggests explanations.

Use **must**, **might** and **can't**, and explain the evidence.

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Answer key | Keep this page separate during student practice.

1. READ: A light upstairs

Sample target language from the conversation:

Tess: There's a light on in the office. Someone **must be** working late.

Mo: It **might be** the cleaner. I saw her van outside.

Mo: It **can't be** Ben. He's on a flight to Madrid right now.

Mo: Good idea. Whoever's upstairs **must be** busy - they haven't answered the bell.

A. CHOOSE

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. be | 2. can't |
| 3. might | 4. have |
| 5. can't | 6. be |
| 7. know | 8. be |

B. COMPLETE: Using clues

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 1. must be | 2. can't be |
| 3. might be | 4. must know |
| 5. can't be | 6. might not be |

C. CHANGE THE SENTENCES

1. He must know the answer.
2. They must be hungry.
3. This can't be the right road.
4. She can't be asleep.

D. WRITE ABOUT YOU / E. SPEAK

Personal answers will vary. Check the target grammar.

Sample: The lights are on, so someone must be inside. It might be Jo. It can't be Ben because he's away.

Teacher note: Must not is not the normal negative deduction form taught here. Contrast must be (deduction) with must leave (obligation) in context.