

PAST MODALS OF DEDUCTION

B2 | Teens / Adults | Grammar Practice | 35-45 minutes

Learn and practise | Use evidence to draw conclusions about past events.

1. READ: A mysterious delivery

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

Tess: Who left these flowers at reception?

Mo: They **might have come** from the new supplier. We helped them last week.

Tess: It **can't have been** them. They don't know we've moved offices.

Mo: Well, someone **must have given** the florist our new address.

Tess: There's a card under the ribbon. It's from Jo!

Mo: She **must have heard** about your promotion. That's lovely.

2. GRAMMAR: Strong or uncertain conclusions about the past

Use must, might or can't + have + past participle to make a deduction about the past.

Use / form	Pattern	Example
Very likely	must have + participle	She must have heard.
Possible	might have + participle	It might have come from Jo.
Not possible	can't/couldn't have + participle	It can't have been them.

Evidence: Her coat is wet. She must have walked in the rain.

Possibility: He might have missed the message; I'm not sure.

Couldn't have can express impossibility; might not have is an uncertain negative.

A. CHOOSE

Circle the correct option in each sentence.

1. He must have left / leave already.

2. It might have been / be Jo.

3. She can't have done / did it: she was abroad.

4. They must have forgot / forgotten the address.

5. He may not have seen / saw the message.

6. Someone could have take / taken it.

7. It couldn't have been / being Ben.

8. You must have hear / heard the news.

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: Flowers at reception

Use the modal given with have + past participle.

1. Jo knew about the promotion. Someone _____ (must / tell) her.
2. The card isn't signed. It _____ (might / come) from a customer.
3. Ben was abroad yesterday, so he _____ (can't / deliver) it himself.
4. I'm not sure. The florist _____ (may / use) our old address first.
5. The door was locked, so they _____ (must / leave) it at reception.
6. I haven't checked my email. I _____ (might / not / see) the notification.

C. CHANGE THE SENTENCES

1-2: Express a strong deduction with must have.

Example: I'm sure she heard. **She must have heard.**

1. I'm sure he forgot.

2. I'm sure they left early.

3-4: Express impossibility with can't have. Example: I'm sure he didn't do it. **He can't have done it.**

3. I'm sure she didn't take it.

4. I'm sure it wasn't Ben.

D. WRITE ABOUT YOU

Invent three clues about a past event. Write a strong positive, a possible and a strong negative deduction.

Example: **The floor is wet. It must have rained. Jo might have left. Ben can't have been here.**

E. SPEAK WITH A PARTNER

Describe a small mystery, such as a missing bag or an unsigned card.

Use evidence to discuss what **must have**, **might have** or **can't have** happened.

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Answer key | Keep this page separate during student practice.

1. READ: A mysterious delivery

Sample target language from the conversation:

Mo: They **might have come** from the new supplier. We helped them last week.

Tess: It **can't have been** them. They don't know we've moved offices.

Mo: Well, someone **must have given** the florist our new address.

Mo: She **must have heard** about your promotion. That's lovely.

A. CHOOSE

- | | |
|---------|--------------|
| 1. left | 2. been |
| 3. done | 4. forgotten |
| 5. seen | 6. taken |
| 7. been | 8. heard |

B. COMPLETE: Flowers at reception

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. must have told | 2. might have come |
| 3. can't have delivered | 4. may have used |
| 5. must have left | 6. might not have seen |

C. CHANGE THE SENTENCES

1. He must have forgotten.
2. They must have left early.
3. She can't have taken it.
4. It can't have been Ben.

D. WRITE ABOUT YOU / E. SPEAK

Personal answers will vary. Check the target grammar.

Sample: The room is tidy. Someone must have cleaned it. Jo might have helped. Ben can't have done it because he was away.

Teacher note: Deduction is a conclusion, not proof. Accept couldn't have for can't have. Distinguish could have as possibility from unused opportunity in the next lesson.