

PAST MODALS OF DEDUCTION

B2 | Teens / Adults | Grammar Question Practice | 20-30 minutes

Use evidence to draw conclusions about past events without treating guesses as facts.

1. GET STARTED

Take turns asking and answering. Give details and ask a follow-up. You can invent personal details.

A: Have you seen Jo? Her bag's here, but I can't find her.

B: She **must have come** in earlier. She **might have gone** to get coffee.

A: She **can't have gone** far - her coat's here too. I'll check the kitchen.

2. WHAT HAPPENED EARLIER?

1. A parcel is gone and your neighbour texted "Got it." What **must have happened**?
2. You find muddy footprints in a hallway. Who **might have left** them? Give two ideas.
3. Someone missed a call during a flight. Why **can't they have answered** it?
4. An untouched meal is still in the fridge. What **might have changed** someone's plans?
5. A friend looks pleased after an interview. What **may have happened**? How sure are you?
6. A locked room has an open window. How **could someone have entered**?

Keep talking: What evidence supports that? / Could there be another explanation? / How could we check?

3. WEIGH THE EVIDENCE

Give a conclusion and an alternative. Say which claim the evidence really supports.

7. The road is wet but nearby paths are dry. What **might have caused** this?
8. A friend says they were asleep at noon. Their phone sent a message. What **could have happened**?
9. A cafe sold all its cakes before lunch. What **must have happened** to its stock?
10. A guest left before a speech began. Why **can't they have heard** it at the event?

4. INVESTIGATE A SMALL MYSTERY

Invent a harmless mystery, such as a missing lunch or an unexpectedly tidy room.

Give three clues. Your partner suggests explanations and rules out one using evidence.

Example: The door was locked, so they **can't have entered** that way.

Reveal one final clue. Discuss whether it changes your earlier conclusions.

Answer help: They must / might / could / can't have ... because ...

Remember: Modal + have + past participle. Strong deduction isn't the same as proof.