B2 -
Mysterious situations and logical conclusions

Modals of deduction: 'Must', 'Might', and 'Can't'

Warm-up questions

Please guess possible explanations for each situation using 'must', 'might', and 'can't'.

1. Have you ever lost something and had no idea where it went?

2. What do you usually do when something strange happens at work?

3. If your flatmate comes home with muddy shoes at 2 a.m., what might you think?

4. What are some clues that help you figure out what happened in a mystery?

5. Can you think of a time when your first guess was totally wrong?

Murder mystery vocabulary

1. Culprit
2. Witness
3. Deduce
4. Evidence
5. Interrogate
6. Mystery
7. Investigate
8. Examine

a. To look at something carefully to find details.

b. An unexplained event or situation.

c. To question someone formally and thoroughly.

d. To find something out using logic and clues.

e. The person responsible for a crime or wrongdoing.

f. A person who saw something happen.

g. Information or objects used to prove something happened.

h. To try to find out the truth by gathering information.

Useful expressions

"Something's not right here."

"You must be hiding something."

"That can't be a coincidence."

"He might be telling the truth."

"I'm not convinced…"

"That's suspicious."

"Let's follow the evidence."

"We need to get to the bottom of this."

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The Vanishing Sandwich

Context: Alex works in an office and brings the same homemade sandwich every Friday. Today, it vanished from the staff fridge. No one saw anything… or so they claim.

It was 12:45 p.m. when Alex walked into the breakroom, expecting to find his usual tuna sandwich waiting in the fridge. But the shelf was empty. "Maybe I left it at home," he thought. But no — he distinctly remembered packing it this morning.

He looked around. Brian was at the coffee machine, avoiding eye contact. Tina was scrolling on her phone with crumbs on her blouse. Sarah walked in late, holding a large iced coffee and a half-eaten salad.

Alex scanned the fridge again. A suspicious crumpled napkin sat on the top shelf. "Someone must have eaten it," Alex whispered.

But who?

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Reading comprehension questions [1 of 2]

True/False?

1. Alex forgot to bring his lunch.
2. There was no evidence in the fridge.
3. Sarah was already in the breakroom when Alex arrived.
4. Tina had crumbs on her blouse.
5. Alex is sure someone took his sandwich.

Reading comprehension questions [2 of 2]

Short Answer

1. What clues make Alex think someone took his sandwich?

2. Why is Tina suspicious?

3. What do you think happened?

4. How would you feel if this happened to you?

Grammar guide: Modals of deduction

Modal	Use	Example
Must	Strong certainty (positive deduction)	*She must be tired — she's been working all night.*
Might / May / Could	Possibility (less certain)	*He might be lost.*
Can't / Cannot	Strong certainty (negative deduction)	*That can't be true — I saw him yesterday!*

Note: These are used to guess or deduce what is true now, based on evidence.

Matching activity

Instructions: Match the clues (Column A) with the most logical deduction (Column B).

A. Clues	B. Deductions
1. There are muddy footprints by the door.	a. He might have taken the sandwich.
2. Tina has crumbs on her blouse.	b. Someone must have come in from outside.
3. Brian is avoiding eye contact.	c. She can't have gone to the gym.
4. Sarah is holding a salad.	d. She must have just eaten something.
5. She's still in high heels.	e. That can't be his lunch — she hates tuna.

Multiple-choice activity

1. There's no traffic at 8 a.m. — This ____ be a public holiday.

   a. must

   b. might

   c. can't

2. He's smiling and humming — He ____ be in a good mood.

   a. can't

   b. must

   c. might

3. The lights are off and the dog isn't outside — They ____ be sleeping.

   a. must

   b. might

   c. can't

4. She doesn't have her phone — She ____ have forgotten it.

   a. must

   b. might

   c. can't

5. He just ate two burgers — He ____ still be hungry!

   a. must

   b. might

   c. can't

Who took the sandwich?

Instructions: Complete the sentences with 'must', 'might', or 'can't'

1. Brian ___ have taken it — he was acting weird.

2. Tina ___ be the one — she had crumbs all over her.

3. It ___ be Sarah — she just arrived.

4. The sandwich ___ still be at home.

5. Someone ___ have thrown it away by accident.

Roleplay — *Who took my sandwich?*

Instructions:

1. Choose one student to be Alex, the person who lost their sandwich.

2. The others will choose a character role:

   a. Brian (coffee machine guy, nervous)

   b. Tina (crumbs on blouse, distracted)

   c. Sarah (arrived late, has her own lunch)

   d. Cleaner / manager (neutral but saw something strange)

3. Alex will ask questions and deduce who the sandwich thief might be using 'must', 'might', and 'can't'.

Detective and mystery vocabulary list [1 of 3]

People and roles:

1. Suspect = Someone who might have committed the crime.

2. Witness = Someone who saw something happen.

3. Victim = The person affected by the incident.

4. Investigator / Detective = The person solving the case.

5. Culprit = The person who actually did it (guilty party).

6. Accomplice = Someone who helped the culprit.

Detective and mystery vocabulary list [2 of 3]

Action and verbs:

1. Investigate = To look into something carefully.

2. Interrogate = To question someone thoroughly.

3. Confess = To admit to something.

4. Accuse = To say someone did something wrong.

5. Deny = To say you didn't do something.

6. Suspect (verb) = To believe someone might be guilty.

7. Witness (verb) = To see something happen.

8. Examine = To look at something closely.

9. Deduce = To reach a conclusion based on evidence.

10. Eavesdrop = To secretly listen to a conversation.

Detective and mystery vocabulary list [3 of 3]

Nouns and clues:

1. Evidence = Facts or objects that help solve the case.

2. Clue = Something that helps explain a mystery.

3. Alibi = Proof that someone was somewhere else.

4. Motive = The reason someone might commit the act.

5. Crime scene = The place where the incident happened.

6. Fingerprint = Mark left by a finger; often used as evidence.

7. Footprint = Mark left by a foot.

8. Mystery = Something unexplained or unclear.

Thank you for your support.

YouTube: @elucidatedenglish