

MODAL VERBS

CAN COULD

MAY MIGHT

SHALL SHOULD

WILL WOULD

MUST HAVE

MUST HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

We use it to make a deduction about something that has happened. We feel quite sure about it.

Example:

If you can't find your car keys you must have left them in the house.



CAN'T HAVE

CAN'T HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

We are making a deduction about something that didn't happen in the past based on present evidence.

Example:

He **can't have fallen** in love with her. She's married.

SHOULD HAVE

SHOULD HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

Use it to express the idea that something was desirable or needed but didn't take place.

Example:

I **should have called** you yesterday but I forgot.

Shouldn't have: Something took place but it wasn't desirable: You **shouldn't have drunk** so much. Now you feel terrible.



NEEDN'T HAVE

NEEDN'T HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

It's the opposite meaning to 'should have'. It indicates that something was done but it wasn't necessary. The person who did it thought it was necessary.

Example:

You **needn't have bought** more milk. We've got too much.

MIGHT/MAY/COULD HAVE

MIGHT/MAY/COULD HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

Use them to say that something was possible in the past but we are not sure.

Example:

I think I saw Sally at the cinema but I **might /may /could have been** wrong. It was very dark.

MIGHT/COULD HAVE

MIGHT/COULD HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

Use them to say that something was possible in the past but we know that it didn't in fact happen.

Example:

If Mary hadn't been there, my son **might/could have fallen** down and hurt himself. He was so lucky.

Didn't need to vs Needn't have done

◆ **didn't need to + infinitive = it was not necessary to do sth**

It shows that an action did not happen in the past because we knew it was not necessary.

They **didn't need to cut** any more wood.
(=It wasn't necessary for them to cut any more wood, so they didn't).



◆ **needn't have + past participle = it was not necessary to do sth, but it was done**

It shows that an action happened in the past, even though it was not necessary.

You **needn't have bought** me a gift.

(= It wasn't necessary for him to buy her a gift, but he did.)



Compare these different uses.

MAY/MIGHT NOT HAVE

Possibly something did not happen.

Daniel **may not have caught** the bus. I expect he missed it.

(Perhaps he didn't catch it.)

I **might not have locked** the door.

(Perhaps I didn't lock it.)

COULDN'T HAVE

It is impossible that something happened.

Daniel **couldn't have caught** the bus. It doesn't run on Sundays.

(It is impossible for him to have caught the bus.)

Exercise 1

Choose the correct answer using **couldn't** or **couldn't have + a necessary verb**

- I _____ in a big city. I'd hate it. a) couldn't lived b) couldn't live
- We had a really good holiday. It _____ better. a) couldn't have been b) could be
- I _____ that hat. I'd look silly and people would laugh at me.
a) couldn't wear b) could have worn
- Paul has to get up at 4 o'clock every morning. I _____ get up at that time every day. a) couldn't get b) couldn't have waken
- The staff at the hotel were really nice and friendly when we stayed there last summer. They _____ more helpful. a) couldn't have been b) could be
- Thank you for your invitation to the party last week, but I _____ anyway. I was away. a) couldn't come b) couldn't have come

Exercise 2

Choose the correct answer

- 1) Tom hadn't locked his car and it was stolen. He _____ it. a) should have locked b) should locked
- 2) I can't sleep sometimes. My neighbors play music all night. They ____ play music all night. a) shouldn't play b) shouldn't have played
- 3) The picnickers left litter everywhere. They _____ it. a) shouldn't done b) shouldn't have done
- 4) Emma hadn't paid much attention and caused an accident. She _____ more careful. a) should have been b) should been
- 5) Where is your bag? You _____ it in the living room. a) must left b) must have left
- 6) You _____ these flowers, I have already bought them. a) needn't have bought b) didn't need have bought
- 7) I _____ a coat yesterday because it was warm. a) didn't need to wear b) didn't need worn

Exercise 3

Complete the sentences using the words in bold

- 1) I'm completely soaked! We _____ umbrella.
should/ taken
- 2) I've lost my bag. I think _____.
must/ lost
- 3) It's a shame we didn't go on holiday. We _____ fun.
could/ had
- 4) I did badly in the test. I _____ harder.
should/ studied
- 5) The cat doesn't like fruit. It _____.
can't/ orange
- 6) I forgot Kate's birthday. I _____ a present.
should/ bought

Exercise 4

Correct the sentences

- 1) Susan may to know the address.
- 2) We ought be careful.
- 3) I was able finishing all my work.

- 4) You must had had a terrible experience when you stayed at that hotel.
- 5) Nancy couldn't have being at work yesterday, she had a day off.
- 6) You might not have receive my message last weekend.
- 7) The report has to be on my desk yesterday, but you haven't done it yet.
- 8) When I was a child I can swim well.
- 9) You should had called us when you were in our city.