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Complex Past Modals: Continuous and Passive Forms

Hard | C1 | Advanced | C2 | Proficiency | Conditional sentence | Modal verb | Negation | Past tense | Phrasal verb | Passive voice | Perfect tense | Progressive tense

1. Help Detective Paws complete his case notes by choosing the correct phrase.

The suspect claimed he was fast asleep during the heist, but given the trail of artisanal cheese wrappers leading straight from the vault to his bed, he _____ a midnight snack while the diamonds went missing.

Select one.

A) must have been enjoying
B) should have been enjoying
C) can't have been enjoying
D) might be enjoying

2. Help Detective Clouseau finish his rather embarrassing report about the museum heist. Choose the correct complex modal phrases to complete his deductions.

"The thieves were entirely too coordinated. They _____ my daily patrol route for weeks! However, they _____ the laser grid, because I had accidentally left it turned off anyway. Ultimately, the legendary Ruby of Doom _____ by them, as I had already sent it to the dry cleaners in my other jacket."

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

A) would have been monitoring
B) must have been monitoring
C) should have been monitoring

Blank 2

A) must not have hacked
B) needn't have hacked
C) ought not to be hacking

Blank 3

A) should have been stolen
B) could not have been stolen
C) might not have been stealing

3. Choose the correct phrase to finish the time traveler's diary entry.

When I found my smartphone buried in the Jurassic soil, I realized it _____ by a dinosaur, which explains the massive, three-toed scratches on the screen.

Select one.

A) must have been stepped on
B) ought to have stepped on
C) should have been stepped on
D) can have been stepped on

4. Complete the food critic's dramatic review of a disastrous baking show finale.

The judges _____ the sudden explosion of frosting, given their genuinely horrified expressions. To prevent this culinary catastrophe, the industrial mixer _____ long before Chef Pierre decided to add the dry ice.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** can't have been expecting
- **B)** shouldn't have been expecting
- **C)** wouldn't have been expecting

Blank 2

- **A)** would have had to be unplugged
- **B)** must have had to be unplugged
- **C)** ought to have had to unplug

5. Complete the frustrated chef's text message to his best friend.

I spent six hours sculpting a life-sized swan out of butter for the gala, but since the event was abruptly moved online, I _____ all that effort!

Select one.

- **A)** needn't have bothered with
- **B)** mustn't have bothered with
- **C)** couldn't have bothered with
- **D)** wouldn't be bothering with

6. Help the clumsy time traveler complete his diary entry about accidentally changing history.

Looking back, I realize I _____ a neon tracksuit during my undercover mission to the Renaissance. Furthermore, Leonardo da Vinci _____ to paint his masterpiece if I hadn't spilled my futuristic, glowing sports drink all over his blank canvas.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** ought not to have been wearing
- **B)** ought to not have been wearing
- **C)** shouldn't have to have been wearing

Blank 2

- **A)** might never have been inspired
- **B)** might never have inspired
- **C)** must never have been inspired

7. Console the exhausted university student! She just drank six espressos and stayed up all night to memorize her textbook, only to find a "Class Canceled" sign on the door this morning.

Select ALL the grammatically correct sentences that accurately describe her tragic situation using past modals.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** She needn't have memorized the entire textbook.
- **B)** She could have been sleeping peacefully in her warm bed instead.
- **C)** She needn't to have memorized the entire textbook.
- **D)** She could have been slept peacefully in her warm bed instead.
- **E)** She must have been fuming when she finally saw the sign on the classroom door.

8. Complete the frantic email from a science student explaining why the laboratory is currently covered in purple foam. Choose the correct verb phrases for each blank.

"Dear Professor, to start with, the beaker of unstable chemicals _____ in the cooling chamber, but someone placed it on the radiator instead. I admit I _____ when the mixture started bubbling, because I completely missed the warning signs. Still, the resulting explosion _____ solely by my mistake; I strongly suspect the baking soda was actually gunpowder!"

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** must have been leaving
- **B)** ought to have been left
- **C)** would have been left

Blank 2

- **A)** would have been daydreaming
- **B)** might well have been daydreaming
- **C)** ought to have been daydreaming

Blank 3

- **A)** should not have been triggering
- **B)** can't have been triggered
- **C)** needn't have been triggered

9. Read the harsh (but fair!) judge's feedback from "The Great Global Bake-Off." The contestant's cake just collapsed under the weight of 45 layers of fondant.

Select ALL the grammatically correct statements that use complex past modals to describe what happened to the unfortunate cake.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** The cake needn't have been decorated with quite so much heavy edible glitter.
- **B)** To survive that much structural stress, the base would have had to be reinforced with steel.
- **C)** The cake didn't need to have been decorating with quite so much heavy edible glitter.
- **D)** To survive that much structural stress, the base would have had to been reinforced with steel.
- **E)** It could have been saved if you hadn't accidentally dropped it while presenting it to us.

10. Help Detective Paws complete his case notes about the sleepy night guard! Based on the evidence, the guard was found snoring in the breakroom at 2 AM while the museum was robbed.

Select ALL the sentences that grammatically and correctly express past deductions or unfulfilled expectations about the guard's actions.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** He must have been sleeping soundly to completely miss the sound of shattering glass.
- **B)** He should have been patrolling the main gallery at the exact time the thief entered.
- **C)** He must had been sleeping soundly to completely miss the sound of shattering glass.
- **D)** He should have been patrolled the main gallery at the exact time the thief entered.
- **E)** He might have been listening to loud music on his headphones, which would explain a lot.