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Basics. Present Modals of Deduction: Must, Can't, and Might

Medium | B1 | Intermediate | Auxiliary verb | Infinitive | Modal verb | Negation | Present tense | Verb | Verb mood | Progressive tense | Simple tense

1. Become the office gossip for a moment! Select ALL the sentences that use modals of deduction correctly.

"Look at Bob wearing a full tuxedo to the office on a Tuesday! ..."

Select all that apply.

A) He must be going to a special event later.
B) He could be attending a wedding this afternoon.
C) He can be a secret agent.
D) He must to have an important meeting.

2. Complete the roommates' conversation about their very weird cat by choosing the correct modal verbs of deduction.

Roommate A: "Why is Whiskers staring at the blank wall?"
Roommate B: "I don't know. There _____ be a tiny bug crawling there that we can't see."
Roommate A: "No way, the wall is perfectly clean. She _____ be listening to mice in the pipes!"
Roommate B: "Well, she's purring happily and rubbing her face on the floor, so she _____ be scared of whatever it is."

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1
A) could
B) must
C) can't

Blank 2
A) must
B) can't
C) couldn't

Blank 3
A) can't
B) must
C) might

3. Help the frantic cat owner brainstorm! Select ALL the options that correctly complete the sentence to show a 50% possibility.

"I can't find Mr. Whiskers anywhere! I'm not entirely sure, but he _____ hiding in the laundry basket again."

Select all that apply.

A) might be
B) could be
C) may be
D) must be
E) can be

4. Fill in the blanks as two friends try to figure out why their buddy is late for dinner.

"Leo is half an hour late. His phone is going straight to voicemail, so his battery _____ be completely dead.

Or, he _____ be stuck in that terrible construction traffic on 5th Avenue.

He _____ be at home sleeping, though. He texted me that he was leaving his house an hour ago!"

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** must
- **B)** can't
- **C)** could

Blank 2

- **A)** might
- **B)** must
- **C)** can't

Blank 3

- **A)** can't
- **B)** must
- **C)** may

5. You and your friends hear a knock at the door. Select ALL the sentences that make a correct logical deduction.

Context: You ordered a pizza 10 minutes ago, but the restaurant said delivery takes 45 minutes. Your best friend Sarah promised to arrive at exactly 8:00 PM. It is now 8:00 PM, and someone is knocking.

Select all that apply.

- **A)** It must be Sarah.
- **B)** It can't be the pizza delivery.
- **C)** It can be Sarah.
- **D)** It mustn't be the pizza delivery.

6. Help the dog owner figure out what her pet is feeling by choosing the correct word.

Look at Buster drooling over that fallen slice of pepperoni pizza. He hasn't eaten all day, so he ___ be absolutely starving!

Select one.

- **A)** can't
- **B)** might
- **C)** must
- **D)** ought

7. Choose the correct modal verb for each gap to complete the friends' guesses about the mysterious birthday gift sitting on the table.

It rattles lightly when you shake it. It _____ be a board game, but I'm not entirely sure.

It is completely flat and bends easily. It _____ be a new laptop because laptops are rigid and heavy!

Wait, the box has a "Live Animal" sticker and is meowing loudly. It _____ be the little kitten you asked for!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** could
- **B)** must
- **C)** can't

Blank 2

- **A)** can't
- **B)** must
- **C)** might

Blank 3

- **A)** must
- **B)** can't
- **C)** couldn't

8. Help the amateur office detective complete her notes about the missing chocolate cake by selecting the most logical modal verbs.

"Look at Dave! He has chocolate frosting all over his mouth. He _____ be the thief!

But Sarah is severely allergic to chocolate, so she _____ be the culprit.

What about Jim? He's looking a little bit nervous in the corner, so he _____ know something about it. I'll interrogate him next!"

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** must
- **B)** can't
- **C)** could

Blank 2

- **A)** must
- **B)** can't
- **C)** might

Blank 3

- **A)** can't
- **B)** must
- **C)** might

9. Choose the correct words to complete the confused student's thoughts as he arrives at an empty classroom.

The classroom is completely dark and empty. I _____ be in the wrong room.

Wait, the schedule says Room 302, which is this room. The class _____ be on a field trip today, but I don't remember the professor mentioning it.

It is only 9:05 AM, and this is a two-hour lecture, so the lesson _____ be over already!

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** must
- **B)** can't
- **C)** might

Blank 2

- **A)** might
- **B)** must
- **C)** can't

Blank 3

- **A)** can't
- **B)** must
- **C)** could

10. Help the cautious diner make a safe choice! Select ALL the options that correctly complete the sentence.

"I'm really not sure what's in this mysterious green soup. It _____ vegetarian, so you probably shouldn't eat it if you strictly avoid meat."

Select all that apply.

- **A)** might not be
- **B)** may not be
- **C)** couldn't be
- **D)** can't be

11. Help the confused homeowner deduce what is inside a mystery package left on the porch.

"This box is as light as a feather! It _____ be the heavy bowling ball I ordered.

Wait, it's shaped exactly like a guitar case, so it _____ be that vintage acoustic guitar you won at the auction!

Let me check the label... the address is slightly smudged. It _____ belong to our neighbor, Mr. Henderson, but I'm not entirely sure."

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** can't
- **B)** must
- **C)** might

Blank 2

- **A)** must
- **B)** can't
- **C)** might

Blank 3

- **A)** might
- **B)** must
- **C)** can't

12. Help Detective Paws complete his investigation notes about the missing cookies by choosing the correct modal verb for each blank.

The cookie jar is empty and Buster the dog has chocolate crumbs on his nose. He _____ be the culprit!

However, Whiskers the cat is fast asleep in the other room. She _____ be the thief because she hasn't moved from her bed all day.

There is an open window in the kitchen, so a sneaky neighborhood squirrel _____ be involved, but we need more evidence to prove it.

Choose the correct option for each gap.

Blank 1

- **A)** must
- **B)** can't
- **C)** might

Blank 2

- **A)** can't
- **B)** must
- **C)** could

Blank 3

- **A)** might
- **B)** must
- **C)** can't

13. Complete the student's shocked text message to their friend with the correct modal verb.

That guy in the mosh pit ___ be Professor Higgins! He is supposed to be giving a lecture in Tokyo right now!

Select one.

- **A)** mustn't
- **B)** can't
- **C)** shouldn't
- **D)** might

14. Join the roommates in their desperate hunt for the missing TV remote by selecting the right word.

I'm not entirely sure where the remote went. It ___ be under the couch cushions, or maybe the cat hid it again.

Select one.

- **A)** must
- **B)** could
- **C)** can't
- **D)** will

15. Complete the office worker's guess about the mysterious phone call.

The caller ID is blocked. It ___ be the delivery driver with our pizza, but they usually call from a local number. Let's answer it just in case.

Select one.

A) might
B) must
C) can't
D) won't