



lingoda

Modals in the past

GRAMMAR

LEVEL
Advanced

NUMBER
C1_1051G_EN

LANGUAGE
English





Goals

- Can understand and explain the use of the perfective infinitive, including 'can't' and 'couldn't have'.
- Can form more complex sentences using modals of lost opportunity accurately.



Pamela **should have been** here by now. She **must have been** delayed on the road. We **should** phone Henry to let him know we're going to be late. **We could have arrived** on time if we had left by 3 o'clock but there's no way we'll make it there on time for dinner now.





Modals in the past

You'll already be familiar with using modal verbs in the present tense, but we also use modal verbs in a more advanced way – to speculate about the past.



Oh no! I **must have left** my passport on the plane, I can't find it anywhere in my bag.



Quick review of modal verbs

Before we look at modal verbs in the past, let's have a very quick reminder of modal verbs in English. You should already know how to use all of these. We use these verbs to express likelihood, ability, permission and obligation.

can	could
may	might
must	must
will	would
shall	should





Modals in the past and the perfect infinitive

- We also use modal verbs in a more advanced way – to speculate about things which occurred in the past.
- In the present tense, modal verbs are followed by the infinitive form of a verb without *to*.
- When we use modal verbs to speculate about things in the past, the modal verb is followed by the perfect infinitive.
- The perfect infinitive is constructed with the verb **have + past participle**

■ The **perfect infinitive**

- have tried
- have pretended
- have lost
- have done
- have finished



The perfect infinitive

You've got 3 minutes! Can you form the perfect infinitive with 20 different verbs? Here you can use any conjugation of have that you like.



Modals in the past: modals of lost opportunity

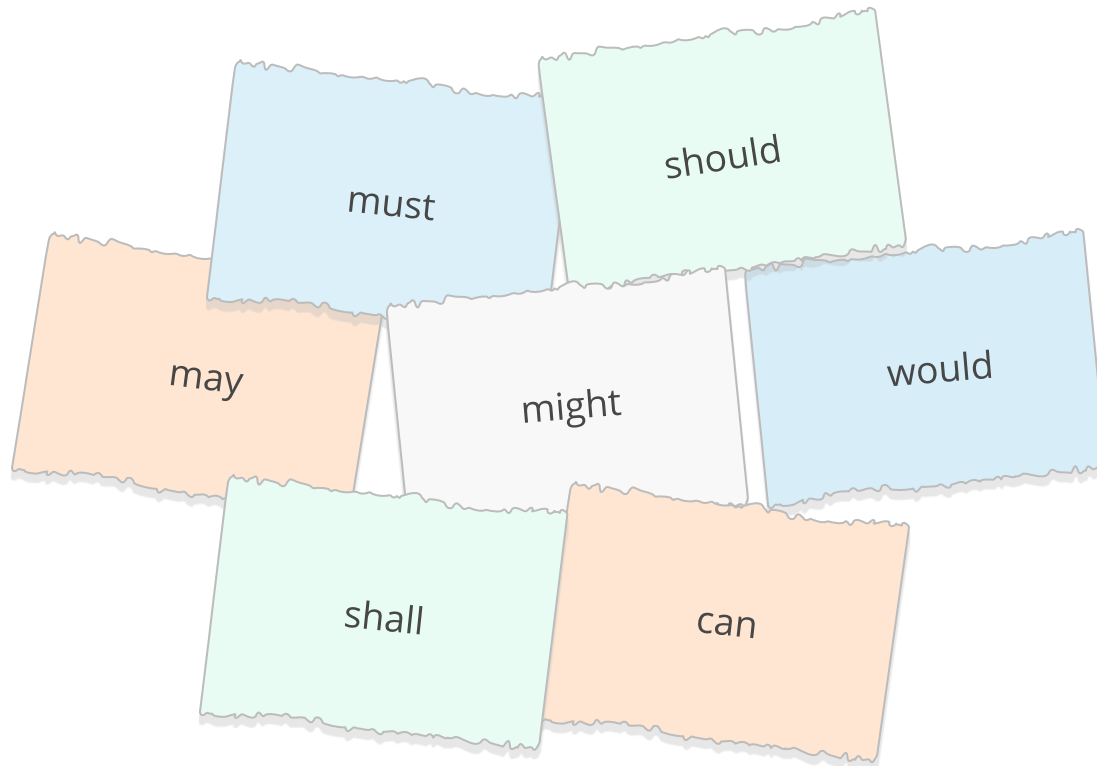
- Should have, could have and would have are often called **modals of lost opportunity**. When we use these modals in the past we are imagining a situation or situations where the past was different.
- To construct a modal of lost opportunity, add the **perfect infinitive** to your chosen **modal verb**.

Modal verb and its use	Modals of lost opportunity
would (used for results)	I would have been a tennis champion by now if I had practised every day.
could (used for possibilities)	I could have won Wimbledon.
should (used for recommendations)	I should have followed my coach's advice and taken the tennis scholarship I was offered.



Quick review

Look at the modal verbs below.
Can you make 3 sentences for each modal verb?





Modals of lost opportunity

These three women went to university together and are still good friends 10 years later. They are reminiscing about their university days. Imagine what they might say, using as many modals of lost opportunity as you can.





Can't with the perfect infinitive

- We use *can't* with the perfect infinitive to express something we're sure didn't happen.

- They **can't have sold** their house yet, the for sale sign is still in the front garden.





Can't and couldn't with the perfect infinitive



- When **can't have** and **couldn't have** are being used to express the impossibility of something, they have a similar meaning.
- Remember that **couldn't/could not have** is more commonly found in written texts.

- The brave sailor **could not have known** how dreadful the weather was going to turn that evening, or he would have never set sail that day.
- Charlotte **couldn't have seen** the mess in the kitchen, or she would never have left the house.
- They **couldn't have made** a quick getaway since the road has been blocked all day.



Imagine the story

Look at the pictures below. Make a sentence using **can't + perfect infinitive** in response to each picture.





Over to you

Can you make 7 sentences, each starting with can't + perfect infinitive? Try to use a different verb each time.



Two sides to every story

Imagine two parties involved in a minor car crash. One party is clearly at fault but reluctant to admit guilt while the other party correctly assumes they were not to blame. Imagine and role play the conversation between the two. Use **could**, **would**, **should**, and **can't + perfect infinitive**.





Must + perfect infinitive

We use **must + perfect infinitive** to express something **we are sure of**.

- You **must have been** so happy to finally see the finish line when you were at the end of the marathon!
- Oh no! We **must have forgotten** Peter's birthday, it was definitely some time in July and now we are in August!
- She **must have received** the invitation by now, I wonder why she hasn't replied yet?



Must vs can and can't



- Remember! Most of the time, we only use **must** in **affirmative** sentences.
- Instead of **must**, use **can** and **can't** in **questions** and **negatives**.



You **can't** have met our new colleague Joe yet, he only started last week when you were on holiday.



What can you deduce?

Look at the pictures below. What can you deduce about what happened in the past from what you can see in each photo? Use **must + perfect infinitive**. Use your imagination! There are a couple of words below to help you.



to catch
something

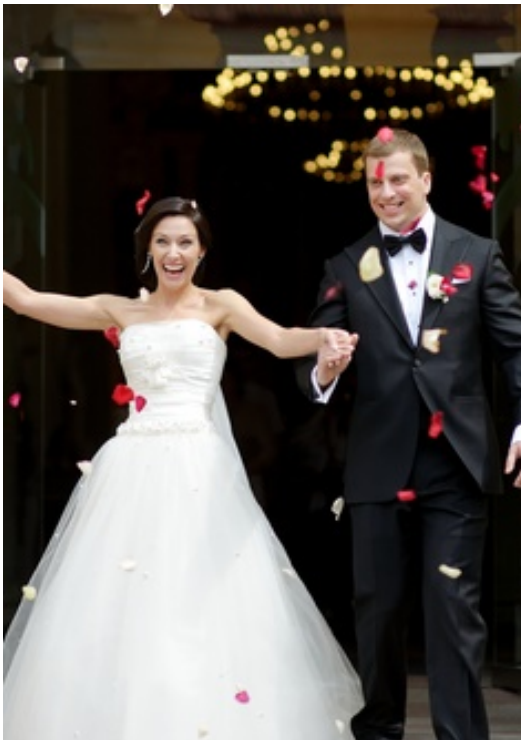


to dream



Over to you

Look at the words below. For each word, make as many sentences as you can using **must + perfect infinitive**.



wedding

birthday

new job

lost keys

son

competition

dog

guitar

Brazil



Write an e-mail

- □ ×

Fiona Carter

Problem with Project E

Dear Ms Carter,

I'm writing to you regarding the conversation we had about _____ the other day.
I must have been distracted, as...

Imagine you have just realised you made a mistake at work the other day. Write your boss an apologetic email explaining yourself using as many modals in the past as you can.



Imagine and describe

Describe how you think life must have been 100 years ago.

Use *must* and the perfect infinitive in your description.

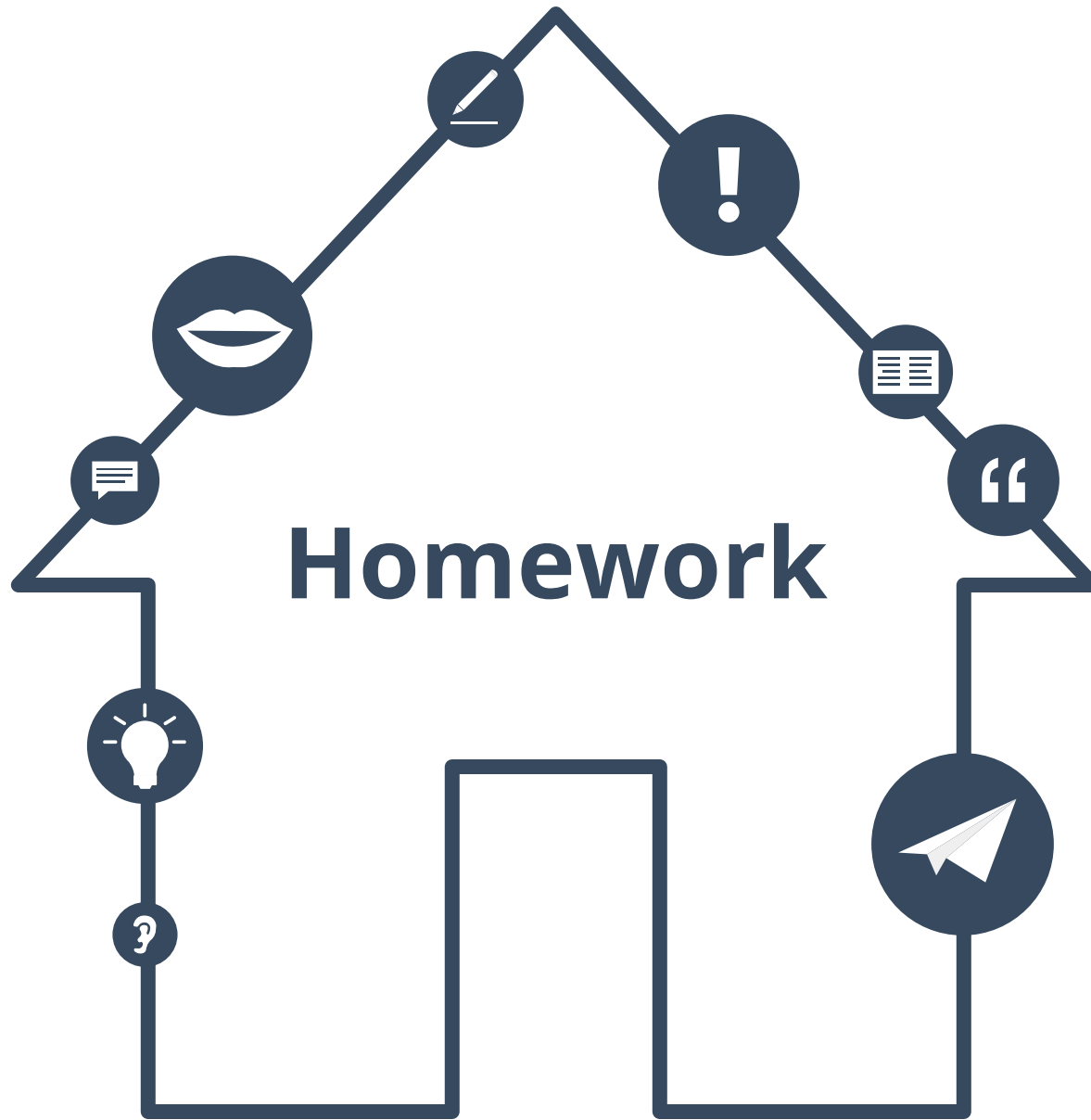


Reflect on the lesson

Take a moment to review any new **vocabulary, phrases, language structures** or **grammar points** you have come across for the first time in this lesson.

Review them with your teacher one more time to make sure you don't forget!







Practice writing

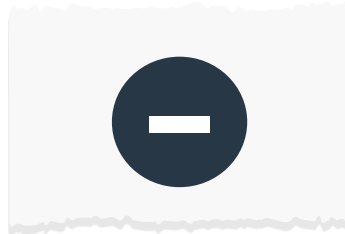
Look over this lesson again. Write five sentences with the perfect infinitive using each of the modals could, would, should, can't and must.

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Reflect and evaluate

Look back over the lesson. What do you think were the most difficult parts and which were the easiest? What else would you have liked to have done in this class?

A vertical sheet of white paper with a spiral binding on the left side and horizontal lines for writing, intended for taking notes during the reflection process.



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