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# Modality in focus: using *might*, *may* and *dare*

GRAMMAR

LEVEL  
Advanced

NUMBER  
C1\_4031G\_EN

LANGUAGE  
English






## Goals

- Can form a more complex sentence using the modal verbs 'might' and 'may' and use them to express permission, criticism and requests accurately.
- Can form a more complex sentence using the semi-modal verb 'dare' and use it to express assumptions, disapproval and offence accurately.





**Might** I suggest being on time for the lesson, given that you are the teacher, after all?

**How dare you?!**



## Modality in focus: using *might*, *may* and *dare*

In this lesson you are going to learn more ways to use the verbs **may**, **might** and **dare**.



**How dare you** speak to me like that?



## Review: *may* for permission

- We use **may** and **might** when talking about **permission**, but we much prefer **may**.
- Using **might** in place of **may** in these sentences would cause confusion, as it implies **possibility** rather than permission.

We may not enter that room, it is closed to the public.

You may take the rest of the day off.

He may not come to the wedding.

You may not talk to that man again.





## Review: *may* and *might* for polite requests

- **May** and **might** are both **modal verbs** which **suggest possibility**.
- When making a **polite request**, we use **may** most often.
- In some cases we can use **might**, but it is very formal and can sound old fashioned.
- May and might are useful in **negotiations**, because they allow you to **politely disagree** and make **another suggestion or proposal**.

- **May/might** I make a suggestion?
- **May/might** I interject?
- **May/might** I explain that from my perspective?
- **May/might** I go over that again?





## Polite criticism with *might*

- When we want to **criticise** someone we don't usually do it directly in English.
- We sometimes make a **rhetorical question** with *might*.
- This is useful during a **negotiation**, when you want to express **disagreement**, but you do not want to come across as rude.

- **Might I suggest** that instead of...
- **Might it be better** to...
- **Mightn't it be better** to...





## Fill in the gaps

Fill in the gaps with either may or might. Justify your choice. Both might be possible.

1. You \_\_\_\_\_ leave early if you have a doctor's note.
2. He still \_\_\_\_\_ come, it's only early after all.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ I ask for a short recess to consider the new evidence?
4. \_\_\_\_\_ I take your plate?
5. We \_\_\_\_\_ not want to move forward on the deal until we know more about their financial situation.







## Making requests

What requests might these people be making?



May I...?



Might I...?



## Practise negotiating with modal verbs

**Practise negotiating the following proposals. Using the expressions you have learnt, politely disagree to the requests then provide an alternative solution.**



May I suggest that instead of working from home, we introduce flexible working hours?

Your employee wants a promotion, but you do not think they are ready yet.

Your employees want to be able to work from home.

Your manager wants to hold a big meeting on Friday afternoon at 4pm.



## Speculating about past actions

- We use both **may** and **might** to **speculate** about actions in the past.
- The structure is **may/might + have + past participle**.
- There is little difference between the two forms.

May	Might
They <b>may have</b> already <b>arrived</b> . I'll go and check.	He <b>might have</b> already <b>finished</b> his work. Let me go and see.
He <b>may not have submitted</b> the form yet. I can call and ask.	They <b>might not have spoken</b> to him yet. I don't want to spoil the surprise.
Her family <b>may not have been</b> as wealthy as those around her.	They <b>might not have taken</b> these statistics into account the last time something like this was planned.
She's late. She <b>may have missed</b> her flight.	You never know. He <b>might not have spread</b> the rumour himself.



## ***Might... but...***

- In a **negotiation**, we often use the phrase **might... but...** when we want to make a **concession**, or add a **differing point of view** to the first phrase.
- This structure is useful for **reaching a compromise**.

- I might not have the most work experience, but I know I can bring a lot of passion to the team.
- Your offer might be viable in the short-term, but...
- It might seem like we are ripping you off, but...





## Speculate about what might have happened in these situations

1. He's late again.

→ He might have got caught up in traffic.

2. Sales are declining.

→ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. John has resigned from the company.

→ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Alice still hasn't replied to my email.

→ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

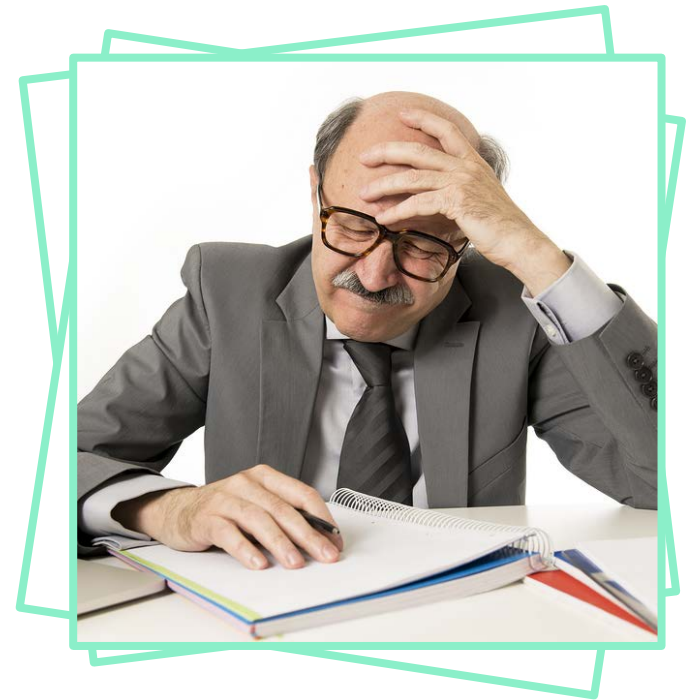
5. Gloria was stuttering during her speech.

→ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Speculating

What's happened? Make speculations using may or might.





## Complete the sentences

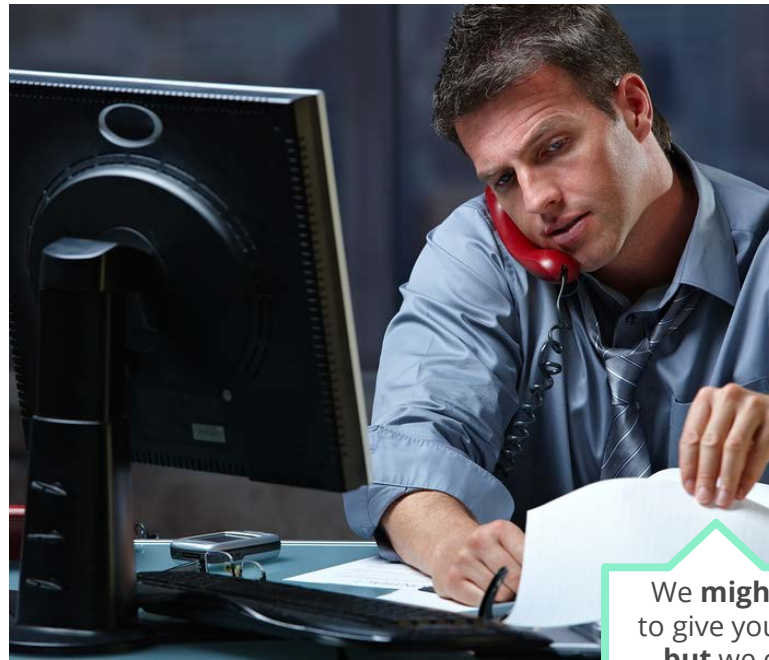
**Complete these sentences so that they make sense.**

1. Our product might be expensive, but...
2. We might not have the largest revenue, but...
3. ...but we can certainly try to deliver the product to you more quickly.
4. ...but we certainly have a high customer satisfaction rate.
5. You may not want to invest in a start-up, but...



## Practise negotiating using *might... but...*

Imagine you are a salesperson. One of your customers is asking for a full refund on your product, but you are unwilling to concede. Using *might... but...* offer at least five alternative suggestions and try and reach a compromise.



We **might not** be able to give you a full refund, **but** we can certainly give you a discount on your next purchase.





## The verb *to dare*

- **Dare** is a **semi-modal** verb.
- When it takes its **modal** form, it is not followed by **to** and **does not change** form in the **3<sup>rd</sup> person**.
- It is mostly used in **negative** and **interrogative** sentences. Look at the examples below for its use in the negative.

Negative	Interrogative
We dare not remain here.	<b>Dare you</b> remain in there?
She dare not tell her boss in case she gets fired.	<b>Dare you</b> tell him?
He dare not say it out loud in case of retribution.	<b>Dare I</b> tell my boss what I really think about this project?
I dare not bring it up again. He bit my head off last time.	<b>Dare I</b> bring up that awkward incident from last year?
They dare not arrive back late again. The manager is in a bad mood.	<b>Dare we</b> risk it?



## Making assumptions

- We can also use **dare** to make **assumptions** or express a **probable truth**.
- We use **I dare say...**

I dare say he makes a lot of money, but he works hard enough.

Claire's been travelling all week - poor girl. I dare say she could do with a rest.

I dare say you've heard about her. She's infamous in these parts.

I dare say they'll come to the party. They've never been known to pass up free food.

That house hasn't been lived in for years. I dare say it could do with a spruce up.





## Dare I say it..?



- This phrase is used to express something shocking or controversial. It is an implied rhetorical question.



**Dare I say it**, but I found that report extremely dull.



## Expressing disapproval or outrage

- In the **negative** or **interrogative**, **dare** can be used to express **disapproval** or **outrage**.
- It is often used as a **warning** for children in the negative.

Negative	Interrogative
<b>Don't you dare</b> speak to me like that.	<b>How dare you</b> speak to me like that?
<b>Don't you dare</b> walk out that door. We are not finished here.	<b>How dare he</b> even think of coming to my wedding after what he did?
<b>Don't you dare</b> tell me how to behave after what you did.	<b>How dare she</b> suggest that I'm incompetent?
<b>Don't you dare</b> eat another one of those biscuits.	<b>How dare they</b> just waltz in here like nothing happened?



## Discuss

**Is there anything  
you daren't do at  
work?**



## Use *I dare say* in response to these situations

1. You sent a neighbour a gift.



I dare say she'll send a thank you note.

2. Their daughter is getting married.



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3. You don't know the answer to a question that's been bugging you.



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4. Your friend has arrived after a long and tedious journey.



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5. Your friend is short of money again.



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## How dare you?

What other situations can you think of when you might use the expressions *how dare you?* or *don't you dare?*





## Write a letter using modal structures

Write a longer letter to an old colleague with whom you are very close. It should be informal in tone. Tell them how your week has been, using as many modal forms you have learned in this lesson as possible.

The letter should include the following:

- Explain how your week has been, including an unexpected change of plans (speculate about what might have happened) and someone who offended you or let you down.
- Give an opinion on something that might be controversial
- Ask for help with something

A large rectangular box with a thin black border, containing several horizontal lines for writing. The lines are arranged in two groups: three lines on the right side and three lines on the left side, with a gap between them.

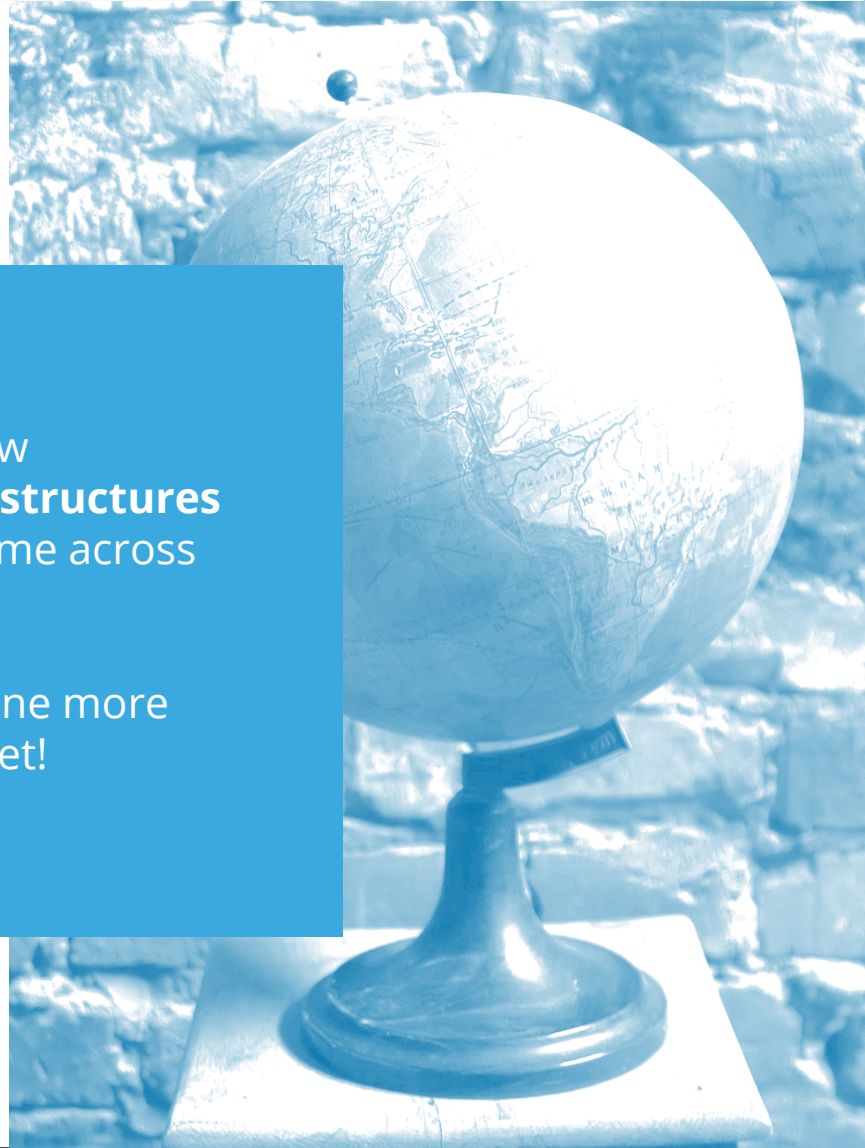




## Reflect on this lesson

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!



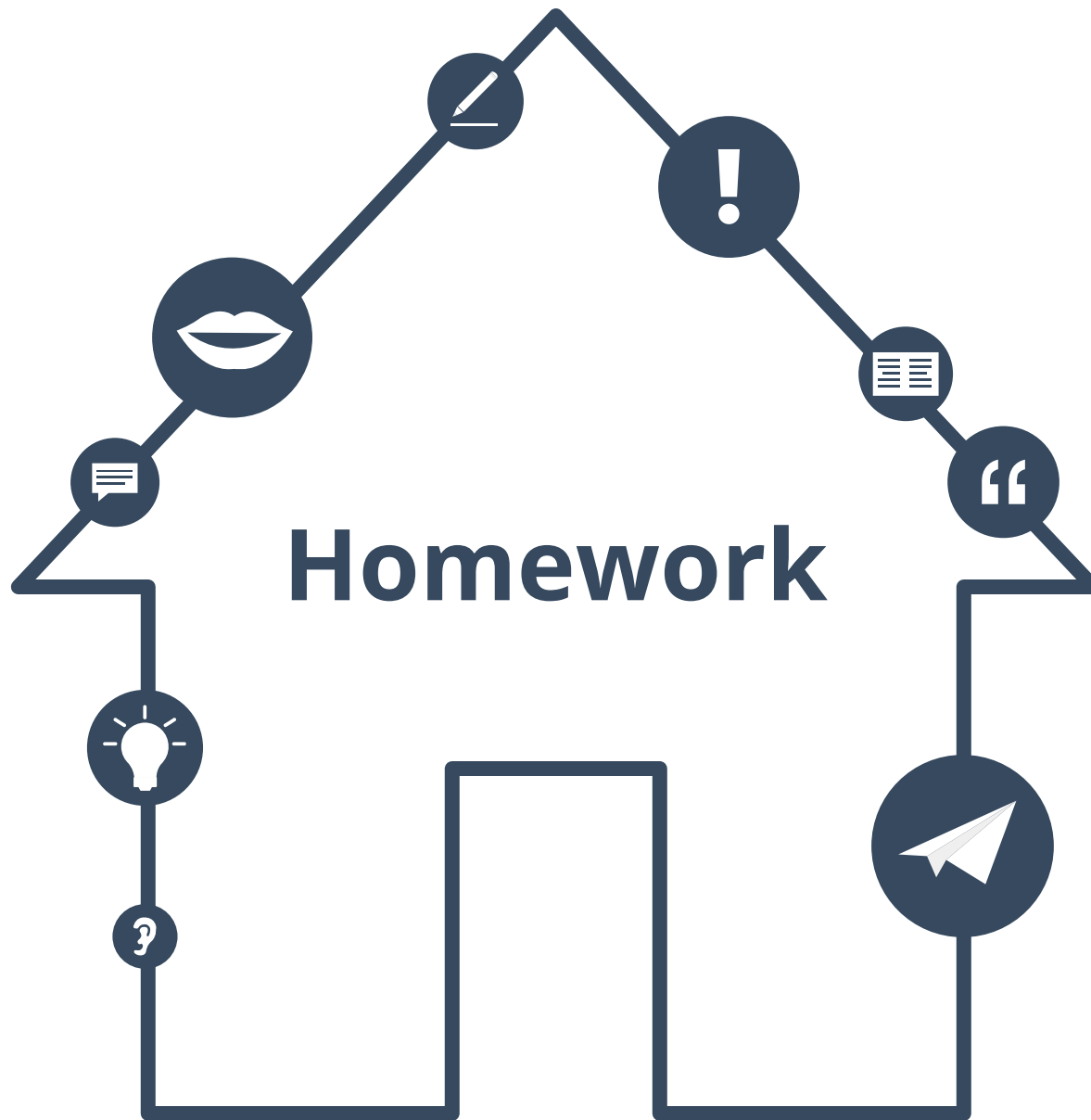


## Answer key

### Exercise p. 8

These answers are a guide - the student might justify a different answer.

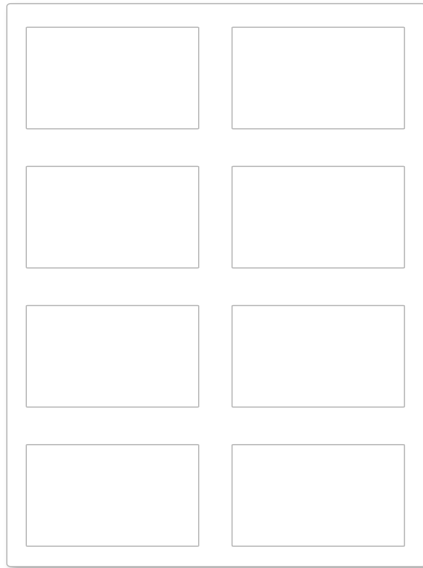
1. May (permission), 2. might (probability), 3. might/may, 4. May, 5. might/may





## Flashcards

**Create flash cards for yourself with useful sentences and phrases from this lesson.**





## Fill in the gaps with an appropriate verb or verb phrase

1. I \_\_\_\_\_ he'll come, he usually tips up at these events.
2. He \_\_\_\_\_ not be able to come if his wife goes into labour.
3. She \_\_\_\_\_ not go out if she doesn't finish her homework.
4. How \_\_\_\_\_? I've just cleaned the floor and look what you've done!
5. I \_\_\_\_\_ talk to my parents the way you do, I think they'd kill me!





## Homework

### **Exercise p. 29**

Suggested answers: 1. I dare say, 2. might, 3. may, 4. dare you, 5. aren't



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