

# 14

## GRAMMAR

### Modal verbs: past

#### Ability

- **Could and was able to**

We use *could* when we talk about general past ability.

*When I was young, I **could** run very fast.*

*When Anna was young, she **couldn't** swim.*

We use *was able to* when we talk about one specific past action.

*Luckily, Mary **was able to** help us.*

*Unfortunately, they **weren't able to** save the dog.*

#### Certainty and uncertainty

- **Must have and can't have**

These are used to make logical deductions about past actions.

*I **must have left** my wallet in the car. (I am sure I did)*

*Jim **can't have noticed** you. (I am sure he didn't)*

Note that we cannot use *must not have* for impossibility or *can have* for possibility.

- **May have, might have and could have**

These express possibility or uncertainty about past actions.

*Jean **might have missed** the train. (perhaps she did)*

*She **may have taken** a later train. (perhaps she did)*

*Tim **might not have got** your letter. (perhaps he didn't)*

*Tim **may not have got** your letter. (perhaps he didn't)*

*You **could have been killed!** (it was a possibility)*

*Could have* is not normally used with *not* with the meaning of possibility or uncertainty.

- **Was / Were to have**

This describes something which was supposed to happen, but didn't. It is formal in use. The form *have* does not change.

*He **was to have left** yesterday. (he was supposed to leave, but he didn't)*

#### Obligation

- **Had to**

*Must* has no past form, so we use *had to*.

*Sorry I'm late, I **had to take** the children to school.*

The question form is *Did you have to?*

***Did you have to work** late yesterday?*

- **Should have and ought to have**

These express the feeling that a mistake was made. There is a criticism.



*I should have posted this letter yesterday.* (I didn't do the right thing)  
*You shouldn't have told me the answer.* (you were wrong to do so)

● **Needn't have and didn't need to**

There is a difference between these two forms. Compare:

*I needn't have bought a ticket.*

(I bought one, but it wasn't necessary – I made a mistake.)

*I didn't need to buy a ticket.*

(I didn't buy one – I knew it wasn't necessary)

In everyday speech we often use *didn't need to* for both cases.

**Indirect speech**

● **Must and shall**

In indirect speech (see Grammar 5) *must* is reported as *must* or *had to*. *Shall* is reported as *should*.

'You must go.' He told me **I must go**.

He told me **I had to go**.

'Shall I help?' He asked if he **should help**.

## FIRST CERTIFICATE LANGUAGE PRACTICE

### 1 Choose the most suitable response to each comment or question.

- 1 A: What did I do wrong?  
B: **a**) You shouldn't have connected these two wires.  
b) You didn't have to connect these two wires.
- 2 A: Why is the dog barking?  
B: a) It should have heard something.  
b) It must have heard something.
- 3 A: Why are you home so early?  
B: a) I needn't have worked this afternoon.  
b) I didn't have to work this afternoon.
- 4 A: Why did you worry about me? I didn't take any risks.  
B: a) You must have been injured.  
b) You could have been injured.
- 5 A: You forgot my birthday again!  
B: a) Sorry, I should have looked in my diary.  
b) Sorry, I had to look in my diary.
- 6 A: We had a terrible crossing on the boat in a storm.  
B: a) That didn't have to be very pleasant!  
b) That can't have been very pleasant!
- 7 A: Where were you yesterday? You didn't turn up!  
B: a) I had to go to London.  
b) I must have gone to London.
- 8 A: What do you think about the election?  
B: a) The Freedom Party had to win.  
b) The Freedom Party should have won.
- 9 A: There's a lot of food left over from the party, isn't there?  
B: a) Yes, you couldn't have made so many sandwiches.  
b) Yes, you needn't have made so many sandwiches.
- 10 A: What do you think has happened to Tony?  
B: a) I don't know, he should have got lost.  
b) I don't know, he might have got lost.

### 2 Complete the second sentence so that it has a similar meaning to the first sentence, using the word given. Do not change the word given. You must use between two and five words, including the word given.

- 1 It wasn't necessary for me to go out after all. HAVE  
I needn't have gone out ..... after all.
- 2 There was a plan for Jack to become manager, but he left. WAS  
Jack ..... manager, but he left.
- 3 It was a mistake for you to buy that dog. BOUGHT  
You ..... that dog.
- 4 I'm sure that Sally didn't enjoy her holiday. ENJOYED  
Sally ..... her holiday.
- 5 It's possible that Bill saw me. MAY  
Bill ..... me.



**GRAMMAR 14 MODAL VERBS: PAST**

- 6 I'm sure that Karen was a beautiful baby. BEEN  
Karen ..... a beautiful baby.
- 7 Perhaps Alan didn't mean what he said. MEANT  
Alan ..... what he said.
- 8 It's possible that I left my wallet at home. COULD  
I ..... my wallet at home.
- 9 I think you were wrong to sell your bike. SHOULDN'T  
You ..... bike.
- 10 The only thing I could do was run away! HAD  
I ..... run away!

**3 Underline the most suitable phrase in each sentence.**

- 1 We should have turned left. We've missed the turning / We followed the instructions.
- 2 We didn't have to wear a uniform at school. But I never did / That's why I liked it.
- 3 The guard must have unlocked the window. He was ordered to / There is no other explanation.
- 4 You could have phoned from the station. I'm sure you did / Why didn't you?
- 5 You needn't have bought any dog food. There isn't any / There is plenty.
- 6 Ann might not have understood the message. I suppose it's possible / She wasn't supposed to.
- 7 You can't have spent all the money already! You weren't able to / I'm sure you haven't.
- 8 I shouldn't have used this kind of paint. It's the right kind / It's the wrong kind.

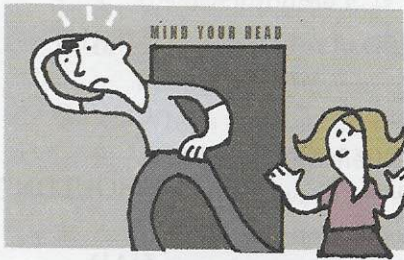
**4 Rewrite each sentence so that it contains can't, might, must, should or needn't.**

- 1 I'm sure that David took your books by mistake.  
~~David must have taken your books by mistake.~~ .....
- 2 It was a mistake to park outside the police station.  
.....
- 3 It was unnecessary for you to clean the floor.  
.....
- 4 I'm sure that Liz hasn't met Harry before.  
.....
- 5 Heather possibly hasn't left yet.  
.....
- 6 I'm sure they haven't eaten all the food. It's not possible!  
.....
- 7 Jack is supposed to have arrived half an hour ago.  
.....
- 8 Perhaps Pam and Tim decided not to come.  
.....
- 9 I think it was the cat that took the fish from the table!  
.....
- 10 It was a waste of time worrying, after all!  
.....



## FIRST CERTIFICATE LANGUAGE PRACTICE

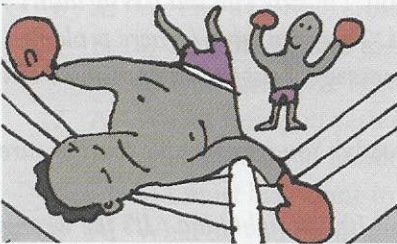
### 5 Choose the most suitable description for each picture.



- 1 a) You must have read the notice.  
b) You should have read the notice.



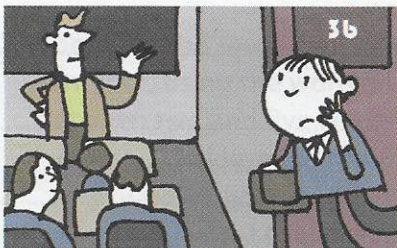
- 2 a) We can't have worn our raincoats.  
b) We needn't have worn our raincoats.



- 3 a) He must have hit him in the right spot!  
b) He should have hit him in the right spot!



- 4 a) You must have caused an accident!  
b) You might have caused an accident!



- 5 a) Sorry, I had to go to the dentist's.  
b) Sorry, I should have gone to the dentist's.



- 6 a) You shouldn't have stroked the lion!  
b) You didn't have to stroke the lion!



## 6 Choose the best answer.

## Zoo escape shocks residents

Residents in the Blackwood area complained last night that they (1) ..... warned about the escape of a dangerous snake. The snake, a python, is three metres long and can kill pets. 'I heard about it on the radio,' said Mrs Agnes Bird.

'I (2) ..... lock my dog in the kitchen this morning, because I thought the snake (3) ..... attacked it. Now I am not sure what I (4) ..... do.'

The snake, called Lulu, disappeared from Blackwood Zoo some time on Thursday.

'It (5) ..... slipped out of its cage while the door was open,' said zoo director Basil Hart. 'There is no other way it (6) ..... got out. It (7) .....

been scared by a sudden loud noise, or perhaps it just felt like a change.' Mr Hart said that people (8) ..... been alarmed. 'There (9) ..... been some misunderstanding, I suppose, when we spoke to the local radio station about this,'

he went on. 'In fact, we found Lulu not long after we noticed she was missing. We (10) ..... to look far. She was asleep under a bush. So you see, you should never believe everything you hear on the radio.'

- |                    |                    |                |                     |
|--------------------|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 1 A must have been | B should have been | C had to be    | D needn't have been |
| 2 A must have      | B should           | C ought to     | D had to            |
| 3 A could have     | B should have      | C must have    | D had to            |
| 4 A had to         | B should have      | C ought to     | D didn't need to    |
| 5 A had to         | B should have      | C needn't have | D must have         |
| 6 A must have      | B might have       | C had to       | D could have        |
| 7 A should have    | B might have       | C needn't have | D shouldn't have    |
| 8 A needn't have   | B should have      | C might have   | D didn't have to    |
| 9 A should have    | B had to           | C may have     | D ought to have     |
| 10 A had           | B didn't need      | C could have   | D should have       |

### Key point

In speech, *have* is often contracted with modals used in the past. Although this is the common spoken form it should not be used in writing.

*You shouldn't've done it.*

### → SEE ALSO

Consolidation 4: Units 13–16