

MODAL VERBS + PERFECT INFINITIVE (PI)

Form: MODAL + HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE

- modal verbs + PI are often used:

- to refer to the past - to refer to unreal situations
- to show that the activity was different from what we wanted
- to say how confident we are that something has happened

1. MUST + PI: expresses deduction, a logical conclusion, probability:

It is very cold; it must have snowed in the mountains.

I saw him leaving; he must have killed him. X He had to kill him.

2. CAN'T/COULDN'T + PI: expresses negative deduction: She can't have passed such a difficult exam. CAN + PI: expresses impossibility or disbelief:

The boy can't have given a better answer than this one. X He couldn't give..., X He wasn't able to give... She can't have missed the bus.

3. COULD + PI: You could have done it. (past reference: didn't do it) X You could do it. (future reference: possibility)

4. MAY + PI: expresses the possibility that an action took place in the past:

The little girl may have lost the key. (It is possible that she lost the key.) (with may – action is more probable than with might)

5. MIGHT + PI: expresses a past possibility Our neighbours might have heard some noises when our car was stolen. MIGHT + PI continuous: expresses a possible action wh. was continuing at a certain moment in the past:

The kids might have been watching a cartoon at that time.

6. NEEDN'T + PI: expresses an unnecessary action, which was, nevertheless, performed: I needn't have knocked at the door since, in this way, I awoke the baby. (but I knocked) You needn't have bought the flowers. X didn't need to: show that the action was not necessary but it wasn't performed either:

I didn't need to knock at the door since it was open. (so I didn't knock)

7. SHOULD + PI: indicates that the past obligation was not fulfilled or carried out:

You should have locked the door before leaving the house. (But you didn't lock it.)

8. OUGHT TO + PI: expresses an unfulfilled duty or obligation:

Paul ought to have waited until the lights were green before he crossed the street. (But he didn't wait.)

9. WOULD + PI: 3rd conditional

I would have gone to university if my parents had had more money. (The speaker didn't go to university.)

Exercise

Fill in the blanks using MUST, CAN'T, MAY, MIGHT, COULD, SHOULD, SHOULDN'T and the PAST FORMS of them !

1. Sally looks worried . She _____ a problem with something (HAVE).
2. Bob _____ at school because I haven't seen him all day (BE).
3. I _____ you the money. Why didn't you ask me (LEND)
4. Mr Travis hasn't come to work yet. He has never been late for work. He _____ the bus (MISS).
5. She knew everything about our plans. She _____ to our conversation (LISTEN)
6. A: Will you come to my birthday party tomorrow afternoon ? B : I'm sorry but I _____ because I have to look after my sister. (COME)
7. Timmy is a very good boy. He isn't naughty, so he _____ that window. Somebody else _____ it (BREAK 2X)
8. The street is wet this morning . I'm not sure but it _____ last night (RAIN). 9. She _____ like an angel when she was a child (SING)
10. A : I talked to your science teacher yesterday. B : You _____ to her because she wasn't at school yesterday. (TALK)
11. Mrs White bought a new fur coat ! - She _____ the lottery (WIN).
12. He came home alone yesterday. You _____ him do that ; he _____ lost. (LET, GET)
13. He read the message but he _____ it (UNDERSTAND)
14. The singer has got a sore throat so she _____ at the concert (SING)
15. It _____ Jack I saw in the park yesterday, but I'm not sure about it (BE). 16. We can't wait any longer. Something _____ at once (DO).
17. Everyone shouted in fear. They _____ very afraid (BE).

18. A : I'm afraid Ted is watching TV again. B : He _____ TV because his room is completely silent and dark. He _____. (WATCH, SLEEP)

19. I can't find my book . I _____ on the bus (LEAVE)

20. She _____ stupid. She teaches maths at the university (BE)

21. She _____ to school. It's Saturday (GO).

22. You were stupid to go skiing here. You _____ a leg (BREAK)

23. He looked so tired when I saw him. He _____ so hard (WORK)

24. Tom _____ this because it is in French and Tom doesn't know French. (WRITE)

Answer

1. She MUST HAVE / MUST HAVE HAD

2. CAN'T BE / CAN'T HAVE BEEN

3. COULD HAVE LENT 9.

4. MUST HAVE MISSED

5. MUST HAVE LISTENED t

6. CAN'T COME

7. CAN'T HAVE BROKEN..... MUST HAVE BROKEN

8. COULD/ MAY / MIGHT HAVE RAINED

9. COULD SING

10. CAN'T HAVE TALKED t

11. MUST HAVE WON

12. SHOULDN'T HAVE LETMIGHT HAVE GOT

13. COULDN'T UNDERSTAND

14. CAN'T SING

15. MAY/MIGHT HAVE BEEN

16. MUST BE DONE

17. MUST HAVE BEEN

18. CAN'T BE WATCHING MUST BE SLEEPING

19. MUST HAVE LEFT

20. CAN'T BE

21. MUSTN'T GO

22. COULD HAVE BROKEN

23. MUST HAVE WORKED

24. CAN'T HAVE WRITTEN