

- We use *may, could, might + have + past participle* and *may, could, might + have been + -ing* to speculate about possibility in the past:

The butler **may/could have done** it – he had the opportunity. (Perhaps he did it.)

'Why do you think they're late?' 'They **may/could have lost** their way.'

Your friend **might have been waiting** for us in the wrong place, so we missed him.

- We use *could + infinitive* to make general statements about possibility in the past:

My father was a kind man, but he **could be** very demanding. (He was sometimes very demanding.)

- We use *can't/couldn't + have + past participle* and *can't/couldn't + have been + -ing* to show something was impossible in the past:

She **couldn't have forgotten** – she's so organised.

Tim **can't have been driving** the car; he doesn't drive.

- We use *should + have + past participle* to talk about an unfulfilled expectation in the past:

They said they'd be here by six. It's eleven. They **should have arrived** hours ago.

They **shouldn't have arrived** before opening hours. They had to wait outside for forty-five minutes.

- We use a modal verb + *have been + past participle* to speculate about a finished event in the passive voice in the past:

The luggage **might have been lost** in transit.

She **can't have been invited** to the wedding reception.

Speculating about the future

- We use *may, might, could + infinitive* or *+ be + -ing* to show something is possible in the future, but not certain. *Might* and *could* indicate a lesser degree of likelihood than *may*:

He **may show up** for the afternoon lecture.

They **might be moving** house tomorrow. (Perhaps they are moving house tomorrow, I'm not sure.)

Anna **could be staying** with us, I'm not sure. (It's possible that Anna will be staying with us.)

- We use *may/might well + infinitive* to strengthen the possibility expressed:

It **may well rain** tomorrow.

- We use *may/might not + infinitive* (NOT *could not*) in negative sentences:

It **may/might not rain** tomorrow – the forecast says there's a 30 percent chance of rain.

- We use *should + infinitive* and *should + be + -ing* to express our expectation that something is true or will be true in the future:

Ask the teacher. She **should know**.

It **shouldn't take** long to get to the station.

It's nearly six o'clock. He **should be** here soon./He **should be arriving** soon.

- We also use *will/won't + adverb + infinitive* to speculate about the future. The degree of likelihood is determined by the adverb used:

We **will probably manage** to catch up with them. (It's possible.)

Her parents **definitely won't let** her go. (Certainly they will not let her go.)

- Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in brackets. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

1 No one could (be) more helpful than my careers adviser when I was deciding what course to choose.

2 I heard you passed your exams with flying colours! You must (feel) on top of the world.

3 I might (know) you would be late for your appointment – you have no concept of time.

4 You can't (listen) very carefully at the time if you don't remember what I said!

5 You could (wait) for me before you went home – I was only ten minutes late!

6 Their plane is due at 10 p.m. They should (land) any minute now.

- Complete the second sentence using the word in capitals so that it has a similar meaning to the first. Use between three and four words in each gap.

1 I'm sure this isn't how you solve this equation. **BE**
This way to solve this equation.

2 It's certain we got on the wrong bus – I don't recognise this neighbourhood! **HAVE**
We on the wrong bus – I don't recognise this neighbourhood!

3 Beth believes her year abroad was the most formative experience of her life. **WELL**
Beth's year abroad the most formative experience of her life.

4 I'm sure you've realised by now that I am not very good with modern technology! **WILL**
You by now that I am not very good with modern technology!

5 Pete is probably in the library filling in his university application form. **MIGHT**
Pete his university application form in the library.

6 I'm sure they didn't inform her about the date of the resit exam. **BEEN**
She about the date of the resit exam.