

UNIT 9

Modal verbs

Modal verbs can express ability, obligation, permission, and request. They can also express the idea of probability or how certain a situation is. There is an introduction to modal auxiliary verbs on p139.

Modal verbs of probability

9.1 Expressing possibility/probability: the present/future

- 1 *Must* and *can't* express the logical conclusion of a situation: *must* = logically probable; *can't* = logically improbable. We don't have all the facts, so we are not absolutely sure, but we are pretty certain.

*He must be exhausted. He can't even stand up.
Sue can't have a ten-year-old daughter! Sue's only 24!
He's in great shape, even though he must be at least 60!
A walk in this weather! You must be joking!
Is there no answer? They must be sleeping. They can't be out this late!*

- 2 *Could* and *may/might* express possibility in the present or future. *May/Might + not* is the negative. *Couldn't* is rare in this use.

*He might be lost.
They could move to a different place.
Dave and Beth aren't at home. They could be at the concert, I suppose.
We may go to Greece for our vacation. We haven't decided yet.
Take your umbrella. It might rain later.
I might not be able to come tonight. I might have to work late.*

The continuous infinitive

Must/could/can't/might + be + -ing make the continuous form in the present.

*Peter might be working late.
They can't be working very hard.*

Compare:

'John's grass is lovely. He must cut it regularly.' (habit)
'What's John doing in the garden?' 'He might be cutting the grass.' (now)

9.2 Expressing possibility/probability: the past

The perfect infinitive

Must/could/can't/might + have + past participle express degrees of probability in the past.

*He must have been exhausted.
She can't have told him about us yet.
He might have got lost.
They could have moved house.*

The continuous infinitive

Must/could/can't/might + have + been + -ing make the continuous form in the past.

*She must have been joking.
They can't have been trying very hard.
He could have been lying to you.*

▶▶ Workbook p57 Further practice of the continuous infinitive

9.3 Asking about possibilities

To ask about possibility/probability we usually use *Do you think ...?* Question forms with modal verbs of probability are unusual.

*'Do you think she's married?' 'She can't be.'
'Where do you think he's from?' 'He might be Spanish or Portuguese.'
'Do you think they've arrived yet?' 'They may have. Or they might have got stuck in the traffic.'*

9.4 So do !! Neither do !!

When we agree or disagree using *So .../Neither ... I*, we repeat the auxiliary. If there is no auxiliary, use *do/does/did*. Be careful with sentence stress.

AGREEING

I like ice-cream.
I'm wearing jeans.
I can swim.
I went out.

● So do I.
● So am I.
● So can I.
● So did I.

I don't like working.
I can't drive.
I haven't been to Paris

● Neither do I.
● Neither can I.
● Neither have I.

DISAGREEING

I don't like Mary.
We're going now.
I can speak Polish.
I haven't been skiing.

● I do.
● We aren't.
● I can't.
● I have.

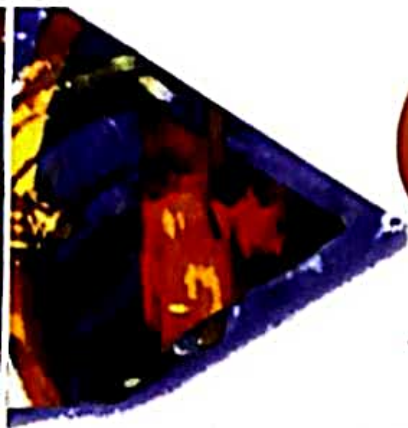
I like pizza.
I saw Pat yesterday.
I'm going to have some coffee.

● I don't.
● I didn't.
● I'm not.

9.5 too and either/neither

We express that we have the same ideas as somebody else by using *too* and *either/neither*. With *too* and *either* we repeat the auxiliary verbs or, if there is no auxiliary, use *do/does/did*.

*I like ice-cream. I do, too. / Me too.
I have always studied hard. I have, too. / Me too.
I don't like working. I don't, either. / Me neither.
I can't play a musical instrument. I can't, either. / Me neither.*



9

Getting on to

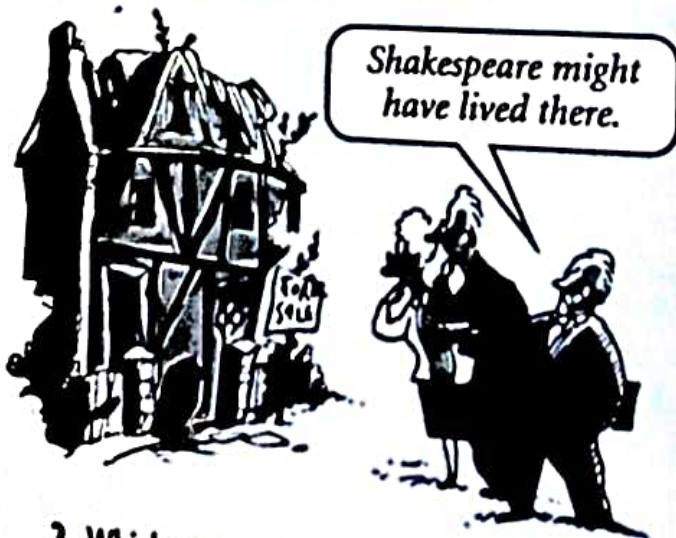
Modal verbs 2 - probability • Character adjectives • 9



TEST YOUR GRAMMAR

1 Read each pair of sentences. If the sentence is a fact, put (✓). If the sentence is only a possibility, put (P).

- 1 I must be ill!
 I'm ill!
- 2 She could be having a shower.
 She's having a shower.
- 3 That isn't your bag.
 That can't be your bag.
- 4 You must have met my brother.
 You've met my brother.
- 5 They haven't met the president.
 They can't have met the president.
- 6 Shakespeare might have lived there.
 Shakespeare lived there.



2 Which sentences talk about the present?
Which talk about the past?

PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS! *must, could, might, can't*

- 1 Do you ever read advice columns in newspapers? What kind of problems do people write about?
- 2 What do you think are the problems of the person below? Who did they write to?

Write

Have you got a problem?

(1) Luke's problem:

*Dear Aunt Amelia,
We fight all the time. I have a problem.*

Aunt Amelia replies:

*Dear Luke,
It is very difficult not to get angry in a difficult situation.*

*your ()
are ()
yo ()
st ()*



PRACTICE

Grammar and speaking

- 1 Respond to the statements or question. Use the words in brackets.
- 1 I haven't eaten anything since breakfast. (must/hungry)
You must be hungry.
 - 2 Steve has three jobs. (can't/much free time)
 - 3 The phone's ringing. (might/Jane)
 - 4 The cat's soaking wet! (must/raining)
 - 5 Listen to all those fire engines! (must/somewhere)
 - 6 I don't know where Sam is. (could/his bedroom)
 - 7 Marta isn't in the kitchen. (can't/cooking dinner)
 - 8 Whose coat is this? (might/John's)

T 9.1 Listen and check. Practise the sentences with a partner. Pay attention to stress and intonation.

W

2

Unit 9

the answer

he

T 9.1

- 1 'I haven't eaten anything since breakfast.'
'You must be hungry.'
- 2 'Steve has three jobs.'
'He can't have much free time.'
- 3 'The phone's ringing.'
'It might be Jane.'
- 4 'The cat's soaking wet!'
'Oh, it must be raining.'
- 5 'Listen to all those fire engines!'
'Ooh, there must be a fire somewhere.'
- 6 'I don't know where Sam is.'
'He could be in his bedroom.'
- 7 'Marta isn't in the kitchen.'
'She can't be cooking dinner.'
- 8 'Whose coat is this?'
'It might be John's.'

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it?

A

V

3

PRACTICE

Grammar and speaking

- 1 Respond to the statements and questions. Use the words in brackets.



- 1 I can't find my homework. (must/forget)
You must have forgotten it.
- 2 Mark didn't come to school last week. (must/ill)
- 3 Why is Isabel late for class? (might/oversleep)
- 4 I can't find my notebook. (must/drop)
- 5 The teacher's checking Maria's work.
(can't/finish already)
- 6 How did Bob get such good marks in that test?
(must/cheat)

T 9.5 Listen and check. Practise the sentences with a partner.

A Great! It's a date. Next time go round the trees.
C You too, Andy. Bye now.
A Bye.

the answer Take care!

T 9.5

- 1 A I can't find my homework.
B You must have forgotten it.
- 2 A Mark didn't come to school last week.
B He must have been ill.
- 3 A Why is Isabel late for class?
B She might have overslept.
- 4 A I can't find my notebook.
B You must have dropped it.
- 5 A The teacher's checking Maria's work.
B She can't have finished already!
- 6 A How did Bob get such good marks in that test?
B He must have cheated!

EVERYDAY ENGLISH

So do // Neither do //

- 1 **T 9.11** Listen to Sue's friends talking to her about themselves. Put a (✓) if it's the same for Sue and a (X) if it's different.

Sue's friends	Sue	Sue's words
1 I want to travel the world.	✓	So do I.
2 I don't want to have lots of children.		
3 I can speak four languages.		
4 I can't drive.		
5 I'm not going to get married until I'm 35.		
6 I went to London last year.		
7 I've never been to Australia.		
8 I don't like dentists.		
9 I'm bored with Hollywood actors.		
10 I love shopping.		

- 2 Write in Sue's words. Choose from the lists below.

So am I.	Neither am I.	I am.	I'm not.
So do I.	Neither do I.	I do.	I don't.
So can I.	Neither can I.	I can.	I can't.
So did I.	Neither did I.	I did.	I didn't.
So have I.	Neither have I.	I have.	I haven't.

- T 9.11** Listen again and check your answers.

I You're married now with two children.
ow
mo
the answer
R Yes, definitely. And they seem very happy and they get along very well with one another.
Usually

- T 9.11** S = Sue, A-J = Sue's friends

- A I want to travel the world.
S So do I.
- B I don't want to have lots of children.
S Neither do I.
- C I can speak four languages.
S I can't.
- D I can't drive.
S Neither can I.
- E I'm not going to get married until I'm 35.
S Neither am I.
- F I went to London last year.
S So did I.
- G I've never been to Australia.
S I have.
- H I don't like dentists.
S Neither do I.
- I I'm bored with Hollywood actors.
S So am I.
- J I love shopping.
S So do I.