

Past Modals Review

Degrees of Certainty

Question: *Why wasn't Kate in class?*

Degree	Example sentence	Comment
?	She was ill.	The speaker is sure.
%95	?	The speaker is making a logical conclusion.
Less than %50	She may have been ill. She might have been ill. She could have been ill.	?

Question: *Why didn't Tom eat his hamburger?*

Degree	Example sentence	Comment
%100	?	The speaker is sure.
%99	?	The speaker believes that it is impossible for Tom to have been hungry.
%95	He must not have been hungry.	?
?	?	The speaker is mentioning one possibility.

For certainty:

True: + V₃

Not True: + V₃

For possibility:

True: + V₃

Not True: + V₃

George is making a journey across the USA by car from New York to San Francisco.

Sentence	Meaning
George must have arrived in San Francisco by now.
He can't / couldn't have got there yet because it will take at least two weeks.
He might / may / could have stopped for a few days on the way.
He might / may not have had time to do everything he wanted.

Teacher's Notes

Class: Level: Intermediate Date: Duration: 45 mins	Past Modals Review (Degrees of Certainty)	I can...
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about different degrees of certainty in the past • Talk about possibilities in the past

Past Modals Review

Degrees of Certainty

Question: *Why wasn't Kate in class?*

Degree	Example sentence	Comment
%100	She was ill.	The speaker is sure.
%95	She must have been ill.	The speaker is making a logical conclusion. Extra explanation: "I saw Kate yesterday and found out that she was ill. She was absent today. She is probably ill now. I can't think of any other good reason."
Less than %50	She may have been ill. She might have been ill. She could have been ill.	The speaker is mentioning one possibility. Extra Explanation: You can express less or more certainty by changing the stress on <i>may, might</i> and <i>could</i>

Question: *Why didn't Tom eat his hamburger?*

Degree	Example sentence	Comment
%100	He wasn't hungry.	The speaker is sure.
%99	He couldn't have been hungry. He can't have been hungry.	The speaker believes that it is impossible for Tom to have been hungry.
%95	He must not have been hungry.	The speaker is making a logical conclusion.
Less than %50	He may not have been hungry. He might not have been hungry.	The speaker is mentioning one possibility.

For certainty:

True: *must have + V₃*

Not True: *can't have/couldn't have + V₃*

For possibility:

True: *might/may/could have + V₃*

Not True: *might not / may not have + V₃*

George is making a journey across the USA by car from New York to San Francisco.

Sentence	Meaning
George must have arrived in San Francisco by now.	I am certain he has arrived in the USA.
He can't / couldn't have got there yet because it will take at least two weeks.	I am certain he hasn't got there.
He might / may / could have stopped for a few days on the way.	It is possible to stop.
He might / may not have had time to do everything he wanted.	It is possible he didn't.