



Deduction & Speculation (must be/can't be/could be): Past Deduction & Probability: Must Have, Can't Have & Could Have Exercises

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

- The streets are wet this morning. It ____ during the night.
a) can't have rained
b) must have rained
c) should have rained
d) might not have rained
- She passed the exam with the highest marks in the class. She ____ incredibly hard.
a) can't have studied
b) shouldn't have studied
c) might not have studied
d) must have studied
- He knew exactly where everything was in the building. He ____ here before.
a) must have been
b) can't have been
c) shouldn't have been
d) might not have been
- The whole cake has disappeared! Somebody ____ it while we were out.
a) shouldn't have eaten
b) can't have eaten
c) must have eaten
d) might not have eaten
- Their flight landed three hours ago. They ____ at the hotel by now.
a) can't have arrived
b) shouldn't have arrived
c) might not have arrived
d) must have arrived
- She was at home all evening — I saw her there. She ____ the email from the office.
a) can't have sent
b) must have sent
c) should have sent
d) could have sent
- Tom didn't know anything about the surprise party. We ____ him about it.
a) must have told
b) can't have told
c) should have told
d) might have told
- The match finished at 3 p.m. and he was at the office until 5 p.m. He ____ the game live.
a) must have watched
b) should have watched
c) can't have watched
d) might have watched
- I posted the letter over a week ago and she still hasn't received it. It ____ lost in the post.
a) should have got
b) might not have got
c) can't have got
d) must have got
- I'm not sure why he left the party early. He ____ ill.
a) might have felt
b) must have felt
c) can't have felt
d) shouldn't have felt



Answers

1. b) must have rained
2. d) must have studied
3. a) must have been
4. c) must have eaten
5. d) must have arrived
6. a) can't have sent
7. b) can't have told
8. c) can't have watched
9. d) must have got
10. a) might have felt
11. b) could have gone
12. c) may have kicked
13. d) might have forgotten
14. c) can't have worn
15. a) must have taken
16. b) may have received
17. c) can't have locked
18. a) must have opened
19. b) can't have read
20. d) might have left



Explanations

1. “must have rained” (b)

Use 'must have + past participle' when present evidence leads to a strong conclusion about the past. Wet streets are strong evidence that it rained during the night.

2. “must have studied” (d)

Use 'must have + past participle' for a strong past deduction. The highest marks are strong evidence that she studied incredibly hard.

3. “must have been” (a)

Use 'must have been' (must have + past participle of 'be') when evidence strongly suggests a past experience. Knowing exactly where everything is strongly suggests he visited before.

4. “must have eaten” (c)

Use 'must have + past participle' when you see the result of a past action and draw a strong conclusion. The cake is gone — someone must have eaten it.

5. “must have arrived” (d)

Use 'must have + past participle' when timing makes a conclusion almost certain. Three hours is more than enough time to get from the airport to a hotel.

6. “can't have sent” (a)

Use 'can't have + past participle' when evidence makes a past action impossible. If she was at home all evening, she could not have sent the email from the office.

7. “can't have told” (b)

Use 'can't have + past participle' when the result proves a past action did NOT happen. Tom didn't know, so logically nobody told him.

8. “can't have watched” (c)

Use 'can't have + past participle' when circumstances made a past action impossible. He was at the office during the match, so he could not have watched it live.

9. “must have got” (d)

Use 'must have got' (must have + past participle) when the evidence strongly suggests what happened. Over a week with no delivery is strong evidence the letter got lost.

10. “might have felt” (a)

Use 'might have + past participle' when you are guessing about the past without strong evidence. 'I'm not sure' tells us this is an uncertain guess, not a strong deduction.

11. “could have gone” (b)

Use 'could have + past participle' when something is a possible past explanation but not certain. No answer at the door could have several explanations — going out is one possibility.

12. “may have kicked” (c)

Use 'may have + past participle' for a possible past explanation that you are not certain about. 'I don't know' shows uncertainty — kicking a ball is one possible explanation.

13. “might have forgotten” (d)

Use 'might have + past participle' when you are speculating about a possible past reason. Not coming to the meeting could have many explanations — forgetting is just one possibility.

14. “can't have worn” (c)

Use 'can't have + past participle' when present evidence (sunburn) proves a past action didn't happen. Being badly sunburnt is strong evidence he did NOT wear sunscreen.

15. “must have taken” (a)

Use 'must have + past participle' when present evidence (tired, calm dog) leads to a strong conclusion about what happened earlier. A very tired dog strongly suggests a long walk.

16. “may have received” (b)

Use 'may have + past participle' when speculating about a possible past cause. 'I wonder' shows uncertainty — receiving bad news is a possible but not certain explanation.

17. “can't have locked” (c)

Use 'can't have + past participle' when the present evidence (unlocked door) proves a past action did NOT happen. An unlocked door means we definitely did not lock it.

18. “must have opened” (a)

Use 'must have + past participle' when evidence (thank-you note) proves what happened. A thank-you note is strong evidence that someone opened the present.

19. “can't have read” (b)

Use 'can't have + past participle' when someone's behaviour (confusion) is strong evidence that they did NOT do something. Complete confusion strongly suggests he didn't read the materials.

20. “might have left” (d)

Use 'might have + past participle' when you are speculating about what possibly happened. Not finding the umbrella leads to a possible explanation (leaving it on the train), but there could be other reasons too.