



Mixed Modals:

Comprehensive Modal Verbs Review: All Functions & Tenses Exercises

Fill in the blank with the correct option.

- She ___ have been very upset when she heard the news. She was crying for hours.
a) must
b) should
c) might
d) could
- You ___ wear a helmet when riding a motorcycle. It's required by law.
a) should
b) have to
c) may
d) ought to
- He ___ have taken a taxi. That's probably why he arrived so early.
a) should
b) must
c) might
d) would
- We ___ to book the hotel in advance. When we arrived, all the rooms were full.
a) could remember
b) must remember
c) might have remembered
d) should have remembered
- ___ you close the window, please? It's a bit cold in here.
a) Could
b) Must
c) Should
d) May
- They ___ have won the match, but they made too many mistakes in the second half.
a) must
b) could
c) should
d) might
- You ___ be so rude to the waiter. He was only trying to help.
a) mustn't be
b) can't have been
c) needn't have been
d) shouldn't be
- In the 1950s, women ___ wear trousers in many offices. It was considered inappropriate.
a) mustn't
b) needn't
c) shouldn't
d) couldn't
- I'd rather ___ somewhere quiet for dinner. I don't like noisy restaurants.
a) go
b) to go
c) going
d) went
- You ___ have told me earlier! Now it's too late to change our plans.
a) might
b) should
c) could
d) must



Answers

1. a) must
2. b) have to
3. c) might
4. d) should have remembered
5. a) Could
6. b) could
7. c) needn't have been
8. d) couldn't
9. a) go
10. b) should
11. c) able to
12. d) can't
13. a) don't need to
14. b) could
15. c) might not
16. d) should
17. a) could
18. b) shouldn't
19. c) must
20. d) could



Explanations

1. “must” (a)

Use 'must have + past participle' for a strong past deduction. Crying for hours is strong evidence that she was very upset. 'Might have' would express uncertainty, but the evidence here is convincing.

2. “have to” (b)

Use 'have to' for external obligations, especially legal requirements. The law makes wearing a helmet compulsory. 'Should' and 'ought to' are too weak for legal requirements.

3. “might” (c)

Use 'might have + past participle' to express a possible past explanation. 'Probably' suggests reasonable possibility but not certainty. If the speaker were certain, 'must have' would be correct, but 'probably why' shows speculation.

4. “should have remembered” (d)

Use 'should have + past participle' to express regret about a past action. They didn't book in advance, and the consequence was no rooms available. The speaker regrets not remembering to book.

5. “Could” (a)

Use 'Could you...?' to make a polite request. It is softer and more polite than 'Can you...?' and much more natural than 'Must you...?' (which implies annoyance) or 'Should you...?' (which questions appropriateness).

6. “could” (b)

Use 'could have + past participle' for an unrealised past possibility. Winning was possible, but the mistakes prevented it. 'Should have won' would imply expectation, while 'could have won' focuses on missed opportunity.

7. “needn't have been” (c)

Use 'needn't have + past participle' when someone did something that turned out to be unnecessary. The person WAS rude, but there was no reason for it because the waiter was being helpful.

8. “couldn't” (d)

Use 'couldn't' for something that was not possible or not allowed in the past. In the 1950s, wearing trousers at work was not permitted for women. 'Mustn't' is used for present/future prohibition, not past.

9. “go” (a)

Use 'would rather + bare infinitive'. 'I'd rather go' uses the base form without 'to'. This is a fixed grammatical pattern for expressing personal preference.

10. “should” (b)

Use 'should have + past participle' to criticise someone for not doing something in the past. The speaker is frustrated that the information came too late. 'Could have told me' focuses on missed opportunity, while 'should have' expresses what was the right thing to do.

11. “able to” (c)

Use 'be able to' to describe ability, especially when emphasising that someone can still do something despite challenges. 'Allowed to' would be about permission, not ability.

12. “can't” (d)

Use 'can't have + past participle' for a strong negative deduction about the past. If his car is still there, it's logically impossible that he has left (by car). 'Might not have' would express uncertain possibility.

13. “don't need to” (a)

Use 'don't need to' when there is no necessity to rush. There is plenty of time before the film starts. 'Mustn't' would mean hurrying is forbidden, and 'can't' would mean it's impossible.

14. “could” (b)

Use 'could' for general ability or permission in the past. The children were allowed to play outside until dark — it was a regular thing. 'Were allowed to' would also work, but 'could' is more natural here.

15. “might not” (c)

Use 'might not have + past participle' for a possible negative past event. It's possible she didn't see it because she often skips emails on weekends, but we can't be certain. 'Can't have' would be too strong because 'never' is a generalisation, not an absolute.

16. “should” (d)

Use 'should' to give advice based on a problem. The speaker is recommending better financial habits. While 'must' could work if the situation were critical, 'should' is the natural choice for personal advice.

17. “could” (a)

Use 'could' for a general ability someone had in the past. Growing up multilingual gave him the ability to speak five languages. 'Was able to' could also work, but 'could' is natural for general past ability.

18. “shouldn't” (b)

Use 'shouldn't have + past participle' to criticise a past action. The person DID park there, but it was a bad decision, as shown by the fine. 'Mustn't have' is not standard for past criticism; 'mustn't' is for present/future prohibition.

19. “must” (c)

Use 'must' for strict rules with no flexibility. 'No extensions will be given' confirms this is a firm requirement. 'Should' would be too weak for a mandatory deadline.

20. “could” (d)

Use 'could have + past participle' for a past possibility that was not taken. The speaker had the option to study medicine but chose a different path. 'Should have' would imply regret, but this sentence is simply stating an alternative that was available.