

4.10 Past modals of deduction

1 We use *may/must/can't/might/could* + *have* + **past participle** to make **deductions** about **events in the past** to talk about what **we think** happened or was true.

Modal	When you ...	
<i>must</i>	are almost certain something happened .	She must have seen us. She was looking right at us! They must have left by now. It's 9:30.
<i>can't</i> <i>couldn't</i>	are almost certain something didn't happen.	He can't have gone to the USA. His visa didn't arrive. They couldn't have seen us at the café this morning because they were still in the meeting.
<i>might</i> <i>may</i> <i>could</i>	think something possibly happened.	We might have made a mistake. It doesn't look right. He may not have read the email or he'd be here now. She could have gone home early. Her office is locked.

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1 We can sometimes use **contractions** in **speaking** and **informal writing**.

1 I think they **must've been** here before – they know a lot about the place.

2 He **could've called**, but I haven't been home all evening.

3 She **mightn't have been** very happy about the promotion. It's a lot more work!

2 Note that in **fast speech** we often use **multiple contractions** in **negative** forms, for example *couldn't've*, *mightn't've*, but we do not write these.

3 Sometimes we use *must not have* in its **full form** to show we think something didn't happen or wasn't true.

I **must not have understood** him correctly. = I **can't have understood** him correctly.

4.10 Practicing past modals of deduction

1 Rewrite the sentences using an appropriate modal verb.

1 Perhaps you made a mistake.

2 I'm sure he spoke Spanish when he was younger – he lived there.

3 It's possible that she wasn't feeling very well.

4 I'm sure they haven't seen each other for ages. She's been away a lot.

5 The car isn't there any more. Perhaps they've sold it.

6 I'm sure you took my jacket by mistake. They're very similar.

4.10 Should/shouldn't have

1 We use *should have* or *shouldn't have* + past participle to talk about and criticize things we **did** or **didn't do** in the **past**.

2 We use *should have* or *shouldn't have* + past participle to say that something **was** or **wasn't a good idea** at the time.

1 They **shouldn't have come**. It was much too far to travel at night.

2 He **shouldn't have taken** the money without asking. I'm still cross with him.

3 What **should** we **have done**? It wasn't an easy situation.

4 I'm so cross with myself now. I **shouldn't have told** him.

5 Do you think we **should have waited**?

3 We only use the **contraction** *'ve* or *n't have* in spoken English.

1 You **should've known** better! You're an adult now!

2 I **shouldn't have trusted** him!

4.10 Practicing should/shouldn't have

Match the sentence halves in each pair as in the first one.

- 1 You should've come to the cinema with us. I told you you would be scared!
- 2 You shouldn't have come to the cinema. You would have loved the film!
- 3 You shouldn't have apologized. He should apologize to you!
- 4 You should have apologized. Now he's really cross with you!
- 5 I shouldn't have said she's in hospital. He could have gone to visit today.
- 6 I should have said she was in hospital. Now he's really worried about her.
- 7 I should have trusted you! You managed to do it by yourself!
- 8 I shouldn't have trusted you! You obviously can't do anything yourself!

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