Assumptions:
May, Might, Could, Must, Have (got) to, Can't

Hhmm. You **must be** Gina Lemont.

Gina Lemont

Right again! This man **has got to be** a genius!

CHECK *POINT*

Check the correct answer.

The famous detective Sherlock Holmes is

☐ making a guess.

☐ talking about an obligation.

CHART CHECK 1

Circle T (True) or F (False).

T F   The third-person singular modal does not end in *-s*.

STATEMENTS

SUBJECT	MODAL	BASE FORM OF VERB	
I/He/She/It/We/You/They	**may (not)** **might (not)** **could (not)** **must (not)** **can't**	**be**	right.
		work	there.

AFFIRMATIVE STATEMENTS: *HAVE (GOT) TO*

SUBJECT	*HAVE (GOT) TO*	BASE FORM	
I/We/You/They	**have (got) to**	**be**	right.
He/She/It	**has (got) to**	**work**	there.

CHART CHECK 2

Circle T (True) or F (False).

T F   All modals of assumptions are used in questions.

YES/NO QUESTIONS

COULD	SUBJECT	BASE FORM	
Could	he	**work**	there?

NOTE: For contractions with *could not* and *cannot*, see Appendix 24 on page 346.

SHORT ANSWERS

SUBJECT	MODAL/ *HAVE (GOT) TO*
He	**must (not).** **may (not).** **might (not).** **could(n't).** **can't.** **has (got) to.**

EXPRESS CHECK

Circle the correct words to complete this conversation.
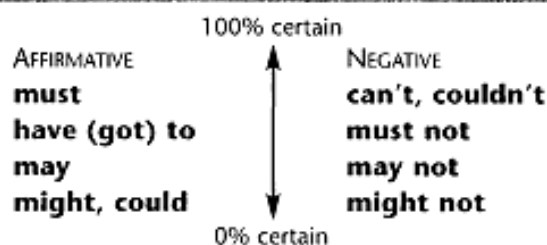
A: I heard a sound coming from the basement. What <u>could / might</u> it be?

B: I'm not sure. It <u>can / might</u> be the cat. It <u>can / can't</u> be the dog. The dog's upstairs.

Grammar Explanations	Examples
1. We often make **assumptions**, or "best guesses," based on information we have about a present situation. The <u>modal</u> that we choose depends on <u>how certain</u> we are about our assumption.	100% certain AFFIRMATIVE ↑ NEGATIVE **must** **can't, couldn't** **have (got) to** **must not** **may** **may not** **might, could** ↓ **might not** 0% certain
2. When you are <u>almost 100 percent certain</u> that something is **possible**, use **must, have to**, or **have got to**. **USAGE NOTE:** We use **have got to** in <u>informal</u> speech and writing, and we usually contract it. When you are <u>less certain</u>, use **may, might,** or **could**.	Holmes is a brilliant detective. ASSUMPTION ■ He **must solve** a lot of crimes. ■ He**'s got to be** a genius! Watson knows a lot about medicine. ASSUMPTION ■ He **might be** a doctor.
3. When you are <u>almost 100 percent certain</u> that something is **impossible**, use **can't** or **couldn't**. When you are <u>slightly less certain</u>, use **must not**. Use **may not** or **might not** when you are <u>less certain</u>. ▶ **BE CAREFUL!** *Have to* and *have got to* are not used to make negative assumptions.	■ He **can't be** dead! I think he's still breathing! ■ She **must not feel** well. She looks pale. ■ He **may not know** about the plan. His boss doesn't tell him everything. ■ It **can't be** true! NOT ~~It doesn't have to be true!~~
4. Use **could** in **questions**. **USAGE NOTE:** We rarely use **might** and we never use **may** in questions about possibility.	■ Someone's coming. Who **could** it be? RARE: **Might** he be at home? NOT ~~May he be at home?~~
5. In **short answers**, use **have (got) to** or a modal alone. Use **be** in short answers to questions that include a form of **be**.	**A:** **Could** Ann know Marie? **B:** She **has to**. They're neighbors. **A:** **Is** Ron still with City Bank? **B:** I'm not sure. He **might not be**.

1 **MATCH** • Each fact goes with an assumption. Match each fact with the correct assumption.

Fact

_f_ 1. Her last name is Lemont. She

_____ 2. He's only thirteen. He

_____ 3. Her eyes are red. She

_____ 4. She's wearing a wedding ring. She

_____ 5. His initials are M.B. He

_____ 6. The house is completely dark. They

_____ 7. She has some gray hair. She

Assumption

a. must not be at home.

b. must be married.

c. has to be older than twenty.

d. can't be married.

e. might have allergies.

f. may be French.

g. could be Marc Brunner.

2 **CHOOSE** • Look at the picture and circle the correct words to complete this conversation.

WATSON: Look! What's going on over there?

HOLMES: I don't know. It (could)/ couldn't be
1.
some kind of delivery.

WATSON: At this hour? It can't / must be
2.
almost midnight! Nothing's
open now.

HOLMES: Hmm. 27 Carlisle Street. That
can't / 's got to be the bank.
3.

WATSON: It *is* the bank.

HOLMES: Can you see what that man is taking out of the carriage?

WATSON: It looks like a box. What do you suppose is in it?

HOLMES: I don't know, but is seems heavy. It could / must not contain gold.
4.

WATSON: Look at that man in front of the bank. Could / Must he be the bank manager?
5.

HOLMES: He might / might be.
6.

WATSON: But why are they making this delivery at this time? This could / couldn't
7.
be normal.

HOLMES: The manager might not / must want people to know about it. He
8.
couldn't / may be worried about robbers.
9.

3 **COMPLETE** • *Read Sherlock Holmes's conversation with a murder suspect. Complete it with the words in parentheses and a modal that shows the degree of certainty. (There may be more than one correct answer.)*

HOLMES: ___You must be Gina Lemont.___
1. Almost certain (You / be / Gina Lemont)

LEMONT: _____. Who wants to know?
2. Possible (I / be)

HOLMES: Sherlock Holmes. I hear something in the next room.

LEMONT: _____. I'm alone.
3. Possible (It / be / the cat)

HOLMES: Alone? _____. There are two
4. Almost certain (You / eat a lot)

plates on the table. _____ that
5. Possible (it / be)

you are mistaken?

LEMONT: No, _____. I was expecting
6. Impossible (it / be)

someone, but he never came.

HOLMES: Does your cat smoke? I smell pipe tobacco.

LEMONT: _____
7. Almost certain (It / come / from your own pipe)

_____
8. Impossible (There / be / any other explanation)

HOLMES: Oh, _____. May we have
9. Possible (there / be)

a look at this "cat"?

4 **EDIT** • *Read this student's reading journal for a mystery novel. Find and correct six mistakes in expressing assumptions. The first mistake is already corrected.*

The main character, Molly Smith, is a college ESL teacher. She is trying to find her dead
                                                              be
grandparents' first home in the United States. It may ~~being~~ in a nearby town. The
townspeople there seem scared. They could be have a secret, or they must just hate
strangers. Molly has some old letters that might lead her to the place. They are in
Armenian, but one of her students mights translate them for her. They hafta be
important because the author mentions them right away. The letter must contain
family secrets. Who is the bad guy? It couldn't be the student because he wants to help.
It might to be the newspaper editor in the town.

10-1 DEGREES OF CERTAINTY: PRESENT TIME

—Why isn't John in class? **100% sure:** He *is* sick. **95% sure:** He *must be* sick. **less than 50% sure:** { He *may be* sick. He *might be* sick. He *could be* sick.	"Degree of certainty" refers to how sure we are—what we think the chances are—that something is true. If we are sure something is true in the present, we don't need to use a modal. For example, if I say, "John is sick," I am sure; I am stating a fact that I am sure is true. My degree of certainty is 100%.
—Why isn't John in class? (a) He *must be* sick. (Usually he is in class every day, but when I saw him last night, he wasn't feeling good. So my best guess is that he is sick today. I can't think of another possibility.)	***Must*** expresses a strong degree of certainty about a present situation, but the degree of certainty is still less than 100%.
	In (a): The speaker is saying, "Probably John is sick. I have evidence to make me believe that he is sick. That is my logical conclusion, but I do not know for certain."
—Why isn't John in class? (b) He *may be* sick. (c) He *might be* sick. (d) He *could be* sick. (I don't really know. He may be at home watching TV. He might be at the library. He could be out of town.)	***May, might,*** and ***could*** express a weak degree of certainty.
	In (b), (c), and (d): The speaker is saying, "Perhaps, maybe,* possibly John is sick. I am only making a guess. I can think of other possibilities." (b), (c), and (d) have the same meaning.

*Maybe (one word) is an adverb: *Maybe he is sick.*
May be (two words) is a verb form: *He may be sick.*

☐ **EXERCISE 2. Degrees of certainty: present time. (Chart 10-1)**

Directions: From the given information, make your "best guess" by using ***must***. This exercise can be done in pairs, in small groups, or as a class. If the exercise is done in pairs, A and B should switch roles halfway through.

Example:

SPEAKER A *(book open):*   Alice always gets the best grades in the class. Why?

SPEAKER B *(book closed):* She must study hard. / She must be intelligent.

1. (. . .) is yawning. Why?
2. (. . .) is sneezing and coughing. Why?
3. (. . .) is wearing a wedding ring. Why?
4. (. . .) is shivering and has goose bumps. Why?
5. (. . .)'s stomach is growling. Why?
6. (. . .) is scratching his arm. Why?
7. (. . .) has already had two glasses of water, but now he/she wants another. Why?
8. (. . .) is smiling. Why?
9. (. . .) is crying. Why?
10. There is a restaurant in town that is always packed (full). Why?
11. I am in my car. I am trying to start it, but the engine won't turn over. I left my lights on all day. What's wrong?
12. Every night there is a long line of people waiting to get into *(a particular movie).* Why?
13. Don't look at your watch. What time is it?

☐ EXERCISE 3. Degrees of certainty: present time. (Chart 10-1)
Directions: Respond by using "I don't know" + *may/might/could*.

Example:
SPEAKER A *(book open):*   (. . .)'s grammar book isn't on her desk. Where is it?
SPEAKER B *(book closed):* I don't know. It may/might/could be in her book bag.

1. (. . .) isn't in class today. Where is s/he? *(I don't know. S/he . . . .)*
2. Where does (. . .) live? *(I don't know. S/he . . . .)*
3. What do you think I have in my briefcase/pocket/purse?
4. What kind of watch is (. . .) wearing?
5. I can't find my pen. Do you know where it is?
6. How old do you think *(someone famous)* is?

☐ EXERCISE 4. Degrees of certainty: present time. (Chart 10-1)
Directions: Complete the sentences by using *must* or *may/might/could* with the
expressions in the list or with your own words.

be about ten	be very proud	✓like green
be at a meeting	feel terrible	miss them very much
be crazy	fit Jimmy	
be rich	have the wrong number	

1. A: Have you noticed that Professor Adams wears something green every day?
   B: I know. He ____must like green.____ _____

2. A: Ed just bought his wife a diamond necklace with matching earrings.
   B: That's expensive! He _____
   A: He is.

3. A: Look at the man standing outside the window on the fifteenth floor of the
      building!
   B: He _____

4. A: Where's Ms. Adams? She's not in her office.
   B: I don't know. She _____, or maybe she's in the
      employee lounge.
   A: If you see her, would you tell her I'm looking for her?
   B: Certainly, Mr. French.

5. A: Hello?
   B: Hello. May I speak to Ron?
   A: I'm sorry. You _____
      There's no one here by that name.

6. A: I've heard that your daughter recently graduated from law school and that your son
      has gotten a scholarship to the state university. You _____
   B: We are.

7. A: You're coughing and sneezing, blowing your nose, and running a fever. You _____

   _____

   B: I do.

8. A: This winter jacket is still in good shape, but Tommy has outgrown it. Do you think it would fit one of your sons?
   B: Well, it's probably too small for

   Johnny, too, but it _____

   _____

9. A: How long has it been since you last saw your family?
   B: More than a year.

   A: You _____
   B: I do.

10. A: How old is their daughter now?
    B: Hmmm. I think she was born around the same time our daughter was born.

    She _____

10-2 DEGREES OF CERTAINTY: PRESENT TIME NEGATIVE

100% sure:	Sam *isn't* hungry.
99% sure:	{ Sam *couldn't be* hungry. Sam *can't be* hungry.
95% sure:	Sam *must not be* hungry.
less than 50% sure:	{ Sam *may not be* hungry. Sam *might not be* hungry.

(a) Sam doesn't want anything to eat. He *isn't* hungry. He told me his stomach is full. I heard him say that he isn't hungry. I believe him.	In (a): The speaker is sure that Sam is not hungry.
(b) Sam *couldn't/can't be* hungry! That's impossible! I just saw him eat a huge meal. He has already eaten enough to fill two grown men. Did he really say he'd like something to eat? I don't believe it.	In (b): The speaker believes that there is no possibility that Sam is hungry (but the speaker is not 100% sure). When used in the negative to show degree of certainty, *couldn't* and *can't* forcefully express the idea that the speaker believes something is impossible.
(c) Sam isn't eating his food. He *must not be* hungry. That's the only reason I can think of.	In (c): The speaker is expressing a logical conclusion, a "best guess."
(d) I don't know why Sam isn't eating his food. He *may not/might not be* hungry right now. Or maybe he doesn't feel well. Or perhaps he ate just before he got here. Who knows?	In (d): The speaker uses *may not/might not* to mention a possibility.

☐ **EXERCISE 5. Degrees of certainty: present time negative. (Chart 10-2)**
Directions: Complete the sentences with your "best guess."

1. A: Yuko has flunked every test so far this semester.
   B: She must not . . . .
   → *She must not study very hard.*

2. A: Who are you calling?
   B: Tarek. The phone is ringing, but there's no answer.
   A: He must not . . . .

3. A: I'm trying to be a good host. I've offered Rosa a glass of water, a cup of coffee or tea, a soft drink. She doesn't want anything.
   B: She must not . . . .

4. A: I offered Mr. Chang some nuts, but he refused them. Then I offered him some candy, and he accepted.
   B: He must not . . . .

5. A: Rosa seems very lonely to me.
   B: I agree. She must not . . . .

☐ **EXERCISE 6. Degrees of certainty: present time negative. (Chart 10-2)**
Directions: Give possible reasons for Speaker B's conclusions.

1. A: Someone is knocking at the door. It might be Mary.
   B: It couldn't be Mary. *(Reason? Mary is in Moscow. / Mary went to a movie tonight. / Etc.)*

2. A: Someone left this wool hat here. I think it belongs to Alex.
   B: It couldn't belong to him. *(Reason?)*

3. A: Someone told me that Karen is in Norway.
   B: That can't be right. She couldn't be in Norway. *(Reason?)*

4. A: Look at that big animal! Is it a wolf?
   B: It couldn't be a wolf. *(Reason?)*

5. A: Someone told me that Marie quit her job.
   B: You're kidding! That can't be true. *(Reason?)*

☐ **EXERCISE 7. Degrees of certainty: present time. (Charts 10-1 and 10-2)**
Directions: Discuss the meaning of the *italicized* verbs.

1. SITUATION: Anna looks at some figures in her business records: 3456 + 7843 = 11,389.
   a. At first glance, she says to herself, "Hmmm. That *may not* be right."
   b. Then she looks at it again and says, "That *must not be* right. 6 + 3 is 9, but 5 + 4 isn't 8."
   c. So she says to herself, "That *couldn't be* right!"
   d. Finally, she adds the figures herself and says, "That *isn't* right."

2. SITUATION: Some people are talking about Ed.

    a. Tim says, "Someone told me that Ed quit his job, sold his house, and moved to an island in the Pacific Ocean."
    b. Lucy says, "That *may not be* true."
    c. Linda says, "That *must not be* true."
    d. Frank says, "That *can't be* true."
    e. Ron says, "That *isn't* true."

3. SITUATION: Tom and his young son hear a noise on the roof.

    a. Tom says, "I wonder what that noise is."
    b. His son says, "It *may be* a bird."
    c. Tom: "It *can't be* a bird. It's running across the roof. Birds don't run across roofs."
    d. His son: "Well, some birds do. It *could be* a big bird that's running fast."
    e. Tom: "No, I think it *must be* some kind of animal. It *might be* a mouse."
    f. His son: "It sounds much bigger than a mouse. It *may be* a dragon!"

    g. Tom: "Son, it *couldn't be* a dragon. We don't have any dragons around here. They exist only in story books."
    h. His son: "It *could be* a little dragon that you don't know about."
    i. Tom: "Well, I suppose it *might be* some kind of lizard."
    j. His son: "I'll go look."
    k. Tom: "That's a good idea."
    l. His son comes back and says, "Guess what, Dad. It's a rat!"

☐ EXERCISE 8. Degrees of certainty: present time. (Charts 10-1 and 10-2)
    Directions: Pair up and create a dialogue.

    SITUATION: You and your friend are at your home. You hear a noise. You discuss the noise: what *may / might / could / must / may not / couldn't / must not* be the cause. Then you finally find out what is going on.

10-4 DEGREES OF CERTAINTY: FUTURE TIME

100% sure:	Kay *will do* well on the test.	→ The speaker feels sure.
90% sure:	Kay *should do* well on the test. Kay *ought to do* well on the test.	→ The speaker is almost sure.
less than 50% sure:	She *may do* well on the test. She *might do* well on the test. She *could do* well on the test.	→ The speaker is guessing.

(a) Kay has been studying hard. She *should do / ought to do* well on the test tomorrow.	*Should / ought to* can be used to express expectations about future events. In (a): The speaker is saying, "Kay will probably do well on the test. I expect her to do well. That is what I think will happen."
(b) I wonder why Sue hasn't written us. We *should have heard / ought to have heard* from her last week.	The past form of *should / ought to* is used to mean that the speaker expected something that did not occur.

☐ EXERCISE 12. Degrees of certainty. (Charts 4-2, 10-1, and 10-4)

Directions: Use **will**, **should/ought to**, or **must** in the following. In some, more than one modal is possible. Discuss the meanings that the modals convey.*

1. Look at all the people standing in line to get into that movie. It _____*must*_____ be a good movie.

2. Let's go to the lecture tonight. It _____*should/ought to* OR *will*_____ be interesting.

3. Look. Jack's car is in front of his house. He _____ be at home. Let's stop and visit him.

4. A: Hello. May I speak to Jack?
   B: He isn't here right now.
   A: What time do you expect him?

   B: He _____ be home around nine or so.

5. A: Who do you think is going to win the game tomorrow?

   B: Well, our team has better players, so we _____ win, but you never know. Anything can happen in sports.

6. A: It's very important for you to be there on time.

   B: I _____ be there at seven o'clock. I promise!

7. A: What time are you going to arrive?
   B: Well, the trip takes about four hours. I think I'll leave sometime around noon, so I

   _____ get there around four.

8. A: Here are your tickets, Mr. Anton. Your flight _____ depart from Gate 15 on the Blue Concourse at 6:27.
   B: Thank you. Could you tell me where the Blue Concourse is?

9. A: Susie is yawning and rubbing her eyes.

   B: She _____ be sleepy. Let's put her to bed early tonight.

10. A: Martha has been working hard all day. She left for work before dawn this morning.

    B: She _____ be really tired when she gets home this evening.

11. A: Where can I find the address for the University of Chicago?

    B: I'm not sure, but you _____ be able to find that information at the library. The library carries catalogues of most of the universities in the U.S.

12. A: When's dinner?
    B: We're almost ready to eat. The rice _____ be done in five minutes.

_____

*COMPARE: **Must** expresses a strong degree of certainty about a present situation. (See Chart 10-1, p. 176.) **Should** and **ought to** express a fairly strong degree of certainty about a future situation. (See Chart 10-4, p. 184.) **Will** indicates that there is no doubt in the speaker's mind about a future event. (See Chart 4-2, p. 52.)

13. A: Where's your dictionary?
    B: Isn't it on my desk?
    A: No, I don't see it there.
    B: Okay. Then it must be in the bookcase. You _____ find it on the second shelf. Is it there?

14. Ed has been acting strangely lately.

    He _____ be in love.

15. Hmmm. I wonder what's causing the delay.

    Ellen's plane _____
    been here an hour ago.

16. I thought I had some money in my billfold,

    but I don't. I _____ spent it.

□ EXERCISE 13. Degrees of certainty. (Charts 10-1 → 10-4)
   Directions: Using the information about each situation, complete the sentences.

   1. *Situation:* Someone's knocking at the door. I wonder who it is.
      Information: **Tom** is out of town.
                   Fred called half an hour ago and said he would stop by this afternoon.
                   Alice is a neighbor who sometimes drops by in the middle of the day.

      a. It must be _____Fred._____

      b. It couldn't be _____Tom._____

      c. I suppose it might be _____Alice._____

   2. *Situation:* Someone ran into the tree in front of our house. I wonder who did it.
      Information: **Sue** has a car, and she was out driving last night.
                   Jane doesn't have a car and doesn't know how to drive.
                   Ron has a car, but I'm pretty sure he was at home last night.
                   Ann was out driving last night, and today her car has a big dent in the front.

      a. It couldn't have been _____

      b. It must not have been _____

      c. It could have been _____

      d. It must have been _____

3. *Situation:*   There is a hole in the bread. It looks like something ate some of the bread. The bread was in a closed drawer until I opened it.

   Information: **A mouse** likes to eat bread and is small enough to crawl into a drawer.
   A cat can't open a drawer. And most cats don't like bread.
   A rat can sometimes get into a drawer, but I'm pretty sure we don't have rats in our house.

   a. It could have been _____

   b. It couldn't have been _____

   c. It must have been _____

4. *Situation:*   My friends Mark and Carol were in the next room with my neighbor. I heard someone playing a very difficult piece on the piano.

   Information: **Mark** has no musical ability at all and doesn't play any instrument.
   Carol is an excellent piano player.
   I don't think **my neighbor** plays the piano, but I'm not sure.

   a. It couldn't have been _____

   b. I suppose it could have been _____

   c. It must have been _____

5. *Situation:*   The meeting starts in fifteen minutes. I wonder who is coming.

   Information: I just talked to **Bob** on the phone. He's on his way.
   Sally rarely misses a meeting.
   Andy comes to the meetings sometimes, and sometimes he doesn't.
   Janet is out of town.

   a. _____ won't be at the meeting.

   b. _____ should be at the meeting.

   c. _____ will be here.

   d. _____ might come.

☐ **EXERCISE 14. Degrees of certainty. (Charts 10-1 → 10-4)**
   Directions: Work in pairs. Choose one of the given situations and create a dialogue of 10 to 20 sentences or more. Then present your dialogue to the rest of the class. For each situation, the beginning of the dialogue is given. Try to include modals in your conversation.

   1. *Situation:*   The two of you are roommates or a married couple. It is late at night. All of the lights are turned off. You hear a strange noise. You try to figure out what it might or must be, what you should or should not do, etc.

   A: Psst. Are you awake?
   B: Yes. What's the matter?
   A: Do you hear that noise?
   B: Yes. What do you suppose it is?
   A: I don't know. It . . . .
   B: . . . .

2. *Situation:* Your teacher is always on time, but today it is fifteen minutes past the time class begins and he/she still isn't here. You try to figure out why he/she isn't here yet and what you should do.

A: Mr./Mrs./Ms.*/Miss/Dr./Professor/(Jack)/etc. _____
   should have been here fifteen minutes ago. I wonder where he/she is. Why do you suppose he/she hasn't arrived yet?

B: Well, ...

3. *Situation:* The two of you are supposed to meet Anita and Po at the park for a picnic. You are almost ready to leave when you hear a loud noise. It sounds like thunder.

A: Is the picnic basket all packed?

B: Yes. Everything's ready.

A: Good. Let's get going.

B: Wait. Did you hear that?

A: . . . .

4. *Situation:* It is late at night. The weather is very bad. Your eighteen-year-old son, who had gone to a party with some friends, was supposed to be home an hour ago. (The two of you are either a married couple or a parent and his/her friend.) You are getting worried. You are trying to figure out where he might be, what might or must have happened, and what you should do, if anything.

A: It's already _____ o'clock and _____ isn't home yet. I'm getting worried.

B: So am I. Where do you suppose he is?

A: . . . .