Past Modals of Deduction Worksheet: Must Have, Can't Have

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NAME

DATE

Remember

Form	Example
must have + past participle: almost sure it happened	The ground is wet. It must have rained.
might / may / could have: possible	She might have missed the bus.
can't / couldn't have: almost sure it didn't happen	He can't have finished already!
modal + have been + -ing: action in progress	You must have been dreaming.

Typical mistakes

× Learners often say	✓ Say instead
He must forgot his keys.	He must have forgotten his keys.
She mustn't have seen us. (sure she didn't)	She can't have seen us.
They might have went home.	They might have gone home.

1. Complete

Complete with must have, might have or can't have and the verb in brackets.

1. The lights are off. They _____ (go) to bed.
2. She _____ (steal) the money. She was with me all day.
3. I'm not sure why he's late. He _____ (get) lost.
4. You _____ (be) very happy when you heard the news.
5. He _____ (write) this essay himself. It's perfect, and he's only nine.
6. My keys aren't here. I _____ (leave) them at the office.
7. The streets are full of water. It _____ (rain) all night.
8. They _____ (see) the email. They haven't replied.

2. Choose

Circle the best option.

1. Sarah got the job. She (must have / can't have) done a great interview.
2. He (can't have / must have) been at the party; he was in hospital.
3. I'm not sure. The parcel (might have / must have) arrived; I'll check.
4. You (must be / must have been) tired after such a long flight.
5. She (couldn't have / mustn't have) heard you. She was wearing headphones.
6. They (may have / may) missed the start of the film.
7. He looks guilty. He (must have done / must do) something wrong.
8. The dog is wet. It (must have been swimming / must swim) in the lake.

3. Correct the mistakes

Each sentence has one mistake. Write it correctly.

1. She must of forgotten.
2. He can't have saw me.
3. They mustn't have known. (I'm sure they didn't know.)
4. You must have be very proud.
5. I might left my phone in the taxi.
6. He could have been sleep when you called.

Writing

You come back from holiday and find your flat strange: the plants are watered, there is a strange coat on the chair and the fridge is full. Write 6 deductions.

Speaking

- A friend didn't come to your party and didn't call. What might have happened?
- Look at a famous unsolved mystery (Stonehenge, the Mary Celeste). What must or might have happened?
- Your colleague arrived at work very happy. What could have happened?
- Have you ever lost something important? Where might you have left it?

Answer key

1. Complete: 1 must have gone · 2 can't have stolen · 3 might have got · 4 must have been · 5 can't have written · 6 might have left · 7 must have been raining · 8 might not have seen / can't have seen

2. Choose: 1 must have · 2 can't have · 3 might have · 4 must have been · 5 couldn't have · 6 may have · 7 must have done · 8 must have been swimming

3. Correct the mistakes: 1 She must have forgotten. · 2 He can't have seen me. · 3 They can't have known. · 4 You must have been very proud. · 5 I might have left my phone in the taxi. · 6 He could have been sleeping when you called.

Writing, model answer: Someone must have been in my flat while I was away. It can't have been a burglar, because nothing is missing. My neighbour might have watered the plants; she has a key. The coat can't belong to her, because it's a man's coat. My brother must have stayed here, because he loves that cheese. He might have forgotten his coat when he left.