

Activity Type

Grammar Game:
matching, gap-fill (group
work)

Focus

Modals of deduction:
*must have, might have,
may have, can't have,
couldn't have*

Aim

To review and practice
modals used for making
deductions about the
past.

Preparation

Make one copy of the
cards for each group
of three and cut them
out as indicated. Keep
the situation cards and
deduction cards separate.

Level

Upper-intermediate (B2)

Time

25 minutes

Introduction

In this past modals of deduction game, students match deductions to situations and complete the deductions with suitable modals: *must have, might have, may have, can't have, or couldn't have*.

Procedure

Divide the students into groups of three.

Give each group a set of situation cards and a set of deduction cards.

Ask the students to shuffle the two sets of cards separately and spread them out face-down on the table in two sets.

Students then take it in turns to turn over one situation card and one deduction card.

If the situation matches the deduction, the student completes the sentence on the deduction card with an appropriate modal.

If the group members agree the modal of deduction is correct, the student keeps the two cards and has another turn.

If not, the student turns the cards back over, keeping them in the same place.

The game continues until all the cards have been matched.

The student with the most pairs of cards at the end of the game wins.

(answer key on the next page)

Note: This resource can be edited using a PDF editor.

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Procedure continued

Answer key

1. You almost fell off the cliff! That *must have* been terrifying.
2. He doesn't have a driving license. He *couldn't / can't have* driven there.
3. How did they lose the game? They *can't / couldn't have* tried very hard.
4. Why were there no taxis available? It *might / may / could have* been because it was raining.
5. The referee was standing right there when the tackle happened. He *must have* seen it, surely!
6. Let's go to the lost and found to see if they have your wallet. Someone *might / may / could have* handed it in.
7. I don't know for sure that my phone was stolen. I *might / may / could have* left it in the taxi.
8. All my students' essays were on the wrong topic. They *must have* misunderstood my instructions.
9. Can you please check to see if I've locked the door? I think I *might / may / could have* forgotten to lock it.
10. Oh, good! We've got bread. Jun *must have* bought some this morning.
11. He couldn't have made that table by himself. He *must have* had some help.
12. Wow! Did you eat all that pizza yourself? You *must have* been hungry!
13. I can't find my wallet. You *couldn't / can't have* looked properly. I can see it on the table.
14. Where are my books? You *might / may / could have* left them in the library.
15. Mum's car is parked outside. She *must have* come home earlier than planned.
16. Amy is on holiday in Bali this week. It *couldn't / can't have* been her you saw this morning.
17. I can't find John, and his jacket is here. So, he *couldn't / can't have* gone home.
18. Anika isn't answering her phone. She *might / may / could have* switched it off.
19. What book did you bring to class today? I *might / may / could have* brought the wrong one.
20. Look at his Rolex watch. It *must have* cost a fortune.

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Deducing the Past

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3. How did they lose the game?

4. Why were there no taxis available?

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Deducing the Past



That been terrifying.	I left it in the taxi.
They tried very hard.	It been because it was raining.
He driven there.	Someone handed it in.
He seen it, surely!	They misunderstood my instructions.
I think I forgotten to lock it.	You looked properly. I can see it on the table.
He had some help.	You been hungry!
Jun bought some this morning.	You left them in the library.
She come home earlier than planned.	It been her you saw this morning.
It cost a fortune.	She switched it off.
I brought the wrong one.	So, he gone home.