Modals of Deduction: Playing Detective

Level: B1-B2 Intermediate

Today, we will learn how to use "must", "might", and "can't" to make deductions and solve a fun university mystery together!

Warm-up Questions

Discuss these questions with us:

1. What is your favorite memory from school or university?
2. If you see students cheering loudly in the library, what do you guess happened?
3. Have you ever lost something important right before a big event?





Grammar Rules: Must, Might, Can't

We use modals of deduction to guess how true something is based on evidence.

- **Must:** We use this when we are 100% sure something is true. (Example: He is wearing a graduation gown; he must be graduating today.)
- **Might / May / Could:** We use these when we think something is possibly true (50%). (Example: She is carrying a heavy backpack; she might have a lot of homework.)
- **Can't:** We use this when we are 100% sure something is NOT true. (Example: They are studying for a math test; they can't be in an art class.)



Complete The Sentences

Choose the correct modal (must, might, can't) to complete the deductions:

1. The library is completely dark inside. It _____ be closed.
2. You have been studying for eight hours straight. You _____ be exhausted!
3. The notebook is missing. It _____ be in the locker, but you need to check.
4. That _____ be the professor; he looks too young and is wearing a student uniform!



The Mystery of the Missing Mascot

Read the scenario with us:

Tomorrow is the biggest football game of the year, but the university's lucky mascot costume—a giant eagle—is missing from the sports center! The door was locked, but the window was left open. There are three main suspects: the rival team's captain, the school janitor, and the student who wears the costume. We need to look at the clues and use deductions to find the mascot!



Role-play: The Investigation

Let us practice speaking by acting out a detective scene.

One of you will be the Lead Detective, and the other will be the Assistant. We will review the clues together and make deductions using **'must'**, **'might'**, and **'can't'**. Get ready to solve the case!



Role-play Part 1: The Rival Captain

Assistant: We found this rival team's sports jacket outside the open window.

Detective: That is suspicious. The rival captain **(must/might)** have taken it as a prank.

Assistant: Wait, the campus security cameras show the rival team's bus did not arrive until an hour after the mascot went missing.

Detective: Then the captain **(must/can't)** be the one who took it! We need to keep looking.



Role-play Part 2: The Student Actor

Assistant: What about the student who usually wears the mascot costume? He missed practice today.

Detective: Interesting. He **(must/can't)** have taken it home to practice. Do you think he has it?

Assistant: His roommates say he is still in bed and forgot about practice entirely.

Detective: You are right. He **(might/can't)** have it if he has been asleep all day. He is innocent!



Role-play Part 3: The School Janitor

Assistant: We just saw the school janitor walking out of the laundry room. He has the only master key to the sports center!

Detective: He **(must/might)** have unlocked the door. Let us ask him.

Assistant: The janitor says the costume smelled terrible, so he took it to wash it before the big game!

Detective: He **(must/can't)** be telling the truth. Let us check the washing machine. Yes, here it is, all clean! We solved the case!

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Review



Let us review what we learned today:

- We use must when evidence makes us certain something is true.
- We use can't when evidence makes us certain something is impossible.
- We use might when something is a possibility but we are not totally sure.

"Great job playing detective and solving the university mystery with us today!"

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THANK YOU

You've completed the class!

See you next time.