



MODAL VERBS OF PROBABILITY

PROBABILITY

- may / might / could express uncertainty
 - She could be lost.
- should expresses positive expectation
 - They should be here by now.
- will / must express positive certainty
 - She must be on the bus.
- won't / can't express negative certainty
 - She can't be at home.

PROBABILITY

Must and can't are used to express what we conclude to be the most logical interpretation of a situation.

Will and won't are used to express what we believe or guess to be true about the present.

Modal verbs must and can't aren't used in other forms:

- I'm not sure, but it ~~can~~ be Sally.
- She didn't answer. She ~~mustn't~~ be at home.

Related verbs:

- be bound to
- be likely to

PROBABILITY IN THE PAST

All modal auxiliary verbs can be used with the perfect infinitive to express the past.

- I met a girl at your party. Tall, attractive. – That'**ll have been** Sonya.
- It **must have been** a good party. Everyone stayed till dawn.

Would have thought commonly expresses an assumption or supposition.

- I'**d have thought** they'd be here by now.

Should have done can express advice or criticism about a past event, but can also be used for comic effect.

- You **should have listened** to my advice.
- You **should have seen** his face.

Could have done is used to express an unrealized past ability or a past possibility that didn't happen.

- I **could have gone** to university, but I didn't want to.
- You fool! You **could have killed** yourself.

PAST FORMS

Modal verb	Positive	Negative	Past Form
Must	It must be late.		It must have been late.
May	She may be from England.		She may have been from England.
Could	She could be asleep.		She could have been asleep.
Might	He might call.		He might have called.
Should	They should be here by now.		They should have been here by now.
Can't		It can't be late.	It can't have been late.

EXERCISES

- <http://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/modal-verbs-of-probability-exercise-1.html>
- <http://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/modal-verbs-of-probability-exercise-2.html>
- <http://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/could-have-should-have-would-have-exercise-1.html>