

# 47 Possibility: *may, might, could*

- We use *may, might* or *could* to talk about actions or events that are possible now or in the future: *Pete **may** be in Paris now. Jill **might** phone me later. It **could** rain this afternoon.*
- We use *may not* or *might not*, but not *could not*, to say it is possible that an action or event will not happen now or in the future: *They **may not** come tomorrow. (Not ~~They couldn't come tomorrow.~~) Pete **might not** be there now. (Not ~~Pete couldn't be there now.~~)*



The short form of *might not* is *mightn't*. *May not* does not have a short form.

## PRACTICE

### 47a Re-write the sentences. Use the words in brackets.

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| 0 | It's possible I'll go to France. (may)         | I ..... <i>may go</i> ..... to France. |
| 1 | Maybe they're brothers. (might)                | They ..... brothers.                   |
| 2 | Maybe you'll see Ann in town. (could)          | You ..... Ann in town.                 |
| 3 | Perhaps she doesn't have a computer. (may)     | She ..... a computer.                  |
| 4 | It's possible we won't go out tonight. (might) | We ..... out tonight.                  |
| 5 | It's possible she doesn't want to play. (may)  | She ..... to play.                     |
| 6 | Perhaps he's at the cinema. (could)            | He ..... at the cinema.                |

### 47b Complete the e-mail. Use the words in the box.

~~could go~~   could meet   may not be   may work  
might ask   might do   might not have

New Message

Hi, Kathy!

Thanks for your e-mail. You asked us what our plans are for the summer. Well, Connie (0) ..... *could go* ..... to England to work, like she did last year. Jon says he (1) ..... something different this summer. He wants to go to India, so he (2) ..... for a few weeks or he (3) ..... enough money. I don't want to work in the family hotel again. I'd like a change. I (4) ..... my parents for the money to come to Florida, so it (5) ..... long before I see you again. I (6) ..... your family. What do you think? Write soon!

Esther



## Certainty and deduction: *must*, *can't*

- We use *must* to say we are sure that something is true now because of what we know: *They own three cars. They **must have** a lot of money.*
- We use *can't* when we think something is impossible now because of what we know: *She **can't be** at home. There are no lights on.*



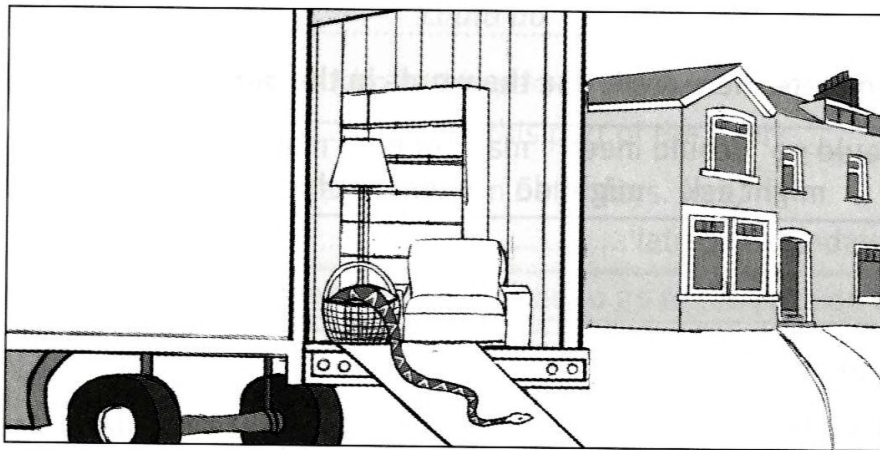
*Can't* is the opposite of *must* here.

### PRACTICE

#### 48a Circle the correct answer.

- 0 A: I thought Meena was coming. B: She is. She must / *can't* be outside.
- 1 A: Is that Britney Spears? B: No, it *must* / *can't* be! She's in America.
- 2 A: Zack has five hundred CDs. B: Wow! He *must* / *can't* love music.
- 3 A: Rachel lives in France. B: She *must* / *can't* speak French, then.
- 4 A: Davy isn't here today. B: He *must* / *can't* be ill again. Poor Davy!
- 5 A: I've just eaten a big pizza. B: Well, you *must* / *can't* be hungry, then.
- 6 A: Hurry up, it's time to go! B: It *must* / *can't* be nine o'clock already!

#### 48b Complete the sentences. Use *must* or *can't* and the verbs in brackets.



- 0 A furniture van has arrived next door. Our new neighbours ..... *must be* ..... here. (be)
- 1 There's a lot of beautiful old furniture. They ..... antiques. (collect)
- 2 There are toys in those boxes. They ..... children. (have)
- 3 The neighbours have just arrived in a taxi. They ..... a car. (own)
- 4 They're both over sixty, so the toys ..... to their children. (belong)
- 5 I suppose they ..... for their grandchildren. (be)
- 6 I don't see any animals. They ..... any pets. (have)
- 7 I've just seen a snake! The snake ..... theirs, surely? (be)



# 49 Requests: *can, could, would*

- We use *Can you ... ? Could you ... ?* and *Would you ... ?* to ask somebody to do something: **Can you lend me a pen?** **Could you open the door, please?** **Would you open your books, please?**
- We use *can* in neutral or informal situations: **Can you move your chair, please?**
- We use *could* to be more polite, or when we want people to do something difficult: **Mike, could you lend me some money?**
- We often use *would* to be polite, especially when we are giving a polite order: **Would you be quiet, please?**
- We also use *would* if we are speaking from a position of authority: **Would you get on with your work, please?** **Would you get my lawyer on the phone for me?**

## PRACTICE

**49a** Complete the requests. Use the verbs in the box and the words in brackets.

bring help lend pass pay phone sign

- 0 ..... **Would you sign** ..... your name on the dotted line, please? (would)
- 1 Dad, ..... me the newspaper on the table? (can)
- 2 Alba, ..... for a taxi, please? I'm very late. (would)
- 3 Waiter, ..... us some more bread, please? (could)
- 4 Danny, ..... me find my coat? I've lost it! (can)
- 5 ..... me five pounds until the weekend, Helen? (could)
- 6 ..... attention when I'm speaking? (would)

**49b** Write requests. Use *can* or *could*.

- 0 You need change for the ticket machine. You only have a five-pound note.  
You ask: **Could you change this five-pound note for me?** .....
- 1 You want your friend to lend you his DVD of *Lord of the Rings* tonight.  
You ask: .....
- 2 You want your English teacher to translate a song for you.  
You ask: .....
- 3 You want a friend to lend you his camera for a week.  
You ask: .....
- 4 Your neighbours are playing loud music. You want them to turn it down.  
You ask: .....
- 5 Your computer isn't working properly. You want your brother to look at it.  
You ask: .....
- 6 You have asked a stranger for directions, but you want him to speak more slowly.  
You ask: .....