MODAL VERBS FOR CERTAINTY, PROBABILITY AND POSSIBILITY — B1 LEVEL

CEFR Level B1 | 3 Worksheets: The Certainty Scale • Guessing About the Past • Reading and Writing | Answer Key Included

Worksheet 1: The Certainty Scale — Present and Future

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B1 (CEFR)

Reference: How Certain Are You?

At B1 you already know *must*, *might* and *can't*. Now we add more forms and learn to place them on a scale from 100% sure to 0%.

Modal	How certain	Notes	Example
must	95% — almost certain YES	Deduction from evidence	The lights are on, so they **must** be home.
should / ought to	70% — expected	What we expect to happen normally	The train **should** arrive at six.
may / might / could	50% — possible	All three are very similar	It **may** snow tonight.
may not / might not	50% — possibly not	Negative possibility	She **might not** come to the party.
can't / couldn't	95% — almost certain NO	Never use "mustn't" here	That **can't** be right — check it again.
will / won't	Prediction	Confident about the future	You **will** love this film.

Watch out: *must not* = it is not allowed. It is <u>never</u> a negative guess. Compare:

"You **mustn't** park here." = It is forbidden.

"That **can't** be his car." = I am sure it is not his car.

Exercise A: Put Them in Order

Write the modals below on the certainty scale, from most certain to least certain.

might not | *must* | *should* | *can't* | *could*

100% YES → _____ → _____ → _____ → _____ → _____ → 100% NO

Exercise B: Complete the Sentences

Complete each gap with a suitable modal. Sometimes more than one answer is possible.

#	Sentence
1	She has been studying all year, so she _____ pass the exam easily.
2	I posted the letter on Monday, so it _____ arrive by now — but I'm not certain.
3	That _____ be Peter at the door. He said he was coming at eight.
4	He _____ be forty. He looks about twenty-five!
5	Take a jacket. It _____ get cold later.
6	They've been travelling for twelve hours. They _____ be exhausted.
7	I'm not sure I can come on Saturday. I _____ have to work.
8	The shop opens at nine, so it _____ be open now — it's half past ten.

Exercise C: Find and Correct the Mistake

Each sentence has one mistake. Correct it and explain the rule in a few words.

1. "He mustn't be at work — his office light is off."
   Correction: _____
   Rule: _____
2. "It might to rain later this afternoon."
   Correction: _____
   Rule: _____
3. "She must has a lot of money to buy that car."
   Correction: _____
   Rule: _____
4. "They can't be arriving tomorrow, they told me so." (meaning: I'm sure they aren't)
   Correction: _____
   Rule: _____

Score: _____ / 20

Worksheet 2: Guessing About the Past

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B1 (CEFR)

Part A – Modal + have + past participle

To guess about the **past**, we use: **modal + have + past participle**. The modal never changes.

Form	Meaning	Example
must have + pp	I'm sure it happened	The ground is wet. It **must have rained**.
might / may / could have + pp	It possibly happened	She **might have missed** the train.
can't / couldn't have + pp	I'm sure it didn't happen	He **can't have finished** — he only started an hour ago.
should have + pp	It was expected, but it didn't happen	The parcel **should have arrived** yesterday.

Careful: we say *must have been*, never "must had been". After a modal, always use have.

Part B – Rewrite the Sentences

Rewrite each sentence using the modal in brackets. Keep the same meaning.

1. "I'm sure she forgot the meeting." *(must)*
   → _____
2. "Perhaps they took the wrong bus." *(might)*
   → _____
3. "I'm certain he didn't see the email." *(can't)*
   → _____
4. "It's possible that the shop was closed." *(may)*
   → _____
5. "I expected the results to be ready by Friday, but they weren't." *(should)*
   → _____
6. "I'm sure the dog ate the sandwich." *(must)*
   → _____

Part C – The Detective Task

A window in the school is broken. Read the evidence and write your guesses.

Evidence	Detail
The window	Broken from the outside; glass is inside the room
On the floor	A football with the number 9 on it
The time	The break happened between 4pm and 5pm
The playground	Year 8 had football practice until 4:30pm
A witness	A cleaner heard a loud noise but saw nobody
The gate	Locked all afternoon; only students were inside

Write five sentences about what happened. Use each form at least once: must have, might have, can't have, could have, should have.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Score: _____ / 25

Worksheet 3: Reading, Speaking and Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____ Level: B1 (CEFR)

Part A – Reading

Read the text and answer the questions.

> *Every year, thousands of people visit the small village of Kilcarrig to see the "singing stones" — three tall rocks in a field that make a low humming sound when the wind blows. Nobody is certain how they got there. Scientists say they must have been moved by ice thousands of years ago, because the rock does not come from this area. Local people disagree. They say the stones can't have moved by accident: they are in a perfect triangle. Some visitors believe the stones may have been placed there for religious reasons, but there is no proof. The truth might never be known. What we do know is that the village should have become rich from tourism by now — but the road is so bad that most visitors turn back before they arrive.*

1. Find **five** modal verbs of certainty or possibility in the text. Write them and say if each one is about the **present/future** or the **past**.

_____

_____

2. Why do the scientists say the stones **must have been** moved by ice?

_____

_____

3. Why do local people say the stones **can't have** moved by accident?

_____

_____

4. What does "the village **should have** become rich" tell us? Did it become rich?

_____

_____

5. Write your own guess about the stones using **might have**.

_____

_____

Part B – Complete the Conversation

Complete the dialogue with a suitable modal (present or past).

Speaker	What they say
MIA	Where's Daniel? The film starts in five minutes.
JAY	He (1) _____ be stuck in traffic. It's Friday evening.
MIA	He (2) _____ have forgotten — I reminded him this morning.
JAY	Then he (3) _____ have left late. He's always the last one out of the office.
MIA	His phone is off. The battery (4) _____ have died.
JAY	Well, he (5) _____ have called us if there was a real problem. Let's go in.

Part C – Writing Task

You come home and find: the front door open, your neighbour's cat in the kitchen, a broken plate on the floor, and a note on the table that says only "Sorry! — J".

Write 80–100 words explaining what you think happened. Use at least FIVE different modal structures from Worksheets 1 and 2.

_____
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_____

Word count: _____ Modals used: _____ / 5

Score: _____ / 25

Answer Key & Teacher Notes

For teacher use only — B1 Level Worksheets

Worksheet 1 – Exercise A (Certainty Scale)

100% YES → **must** → **should** → **could** → **might not** → **can't** → 100% NO

Note: could and might not are both around 50%; accept either order. The key insight is that must and can't sit at the two extremes, and should is stronger than could.

Worksheet 1 – Exercise B (Gap Fill)

#	Answer	Why
1	should	Expectation based on evidence (a year of study).
2	should / may / might	"Not certain" — should = expected; may/might = possible.
3	must / will	Strong deduction from what he said.
4	can't	Appearance is evidence against.
5	might / may / could	A possibility.
6	must	Twelve hours = strong evidence.
7	might / may	Explicit uncertainty.
8	must / should	The opening time makes it a confident deduction.

Worksheet 1 – Exercise C (Errors)

#	Error	Correction & rule
1	mustn't be at work	**can't be at work** — "mustn't" means prohibition, never a negative deduction.
2	might to rain	**might rain** — no "to" after a modal.
3	must has	**must have** — modals take the base form.
4	can't be arriving tomorrow	**won't be arriving** / **aren't arriving** — "can't" is a deduction about what is true now, not a statement about a future arrangement.

Worksheet 2 – Part B (Rewrites)

#	Answer
1	She **must have forgotten** the meeting.
2	They **might have taken** the wrong bus.
3	He **can't have seen** the email.
4	The shop **may have been** closed.
5	The results **should have been** ready by Friday.
6	The dog **must have eaten** the sandwich.

Worksheet 2 – Part C (Detective Task)

Accept any logical sentence supported by the evidence. Model answers:

Form	Model answer
must have	The ball must have come from the playground, because the glass is inside the room.
might have	A Year 8 student might have kicked the ball too hard during practice.
can't have	It can't have been someone from outside, because the gate was locked all afternoon.

Form	Model answer
could have	The noise the cleaner heard could have been the window breaking.
should have	A teacher should have been supervising the practice.

Worksheet 3 – Part A (Reading)

#	Answer
1	**must have been moved** (past); **can't have moved** (past); **may have been placed** (past); **might never be known** (present/future); **should have become** (past). Accept any five.
2	Because the rock does not come from that area — so something must have carried it there.
3	Because the stones form a perfect triangle, which is unlikely to happen by chance.
4	It means we expected the village to become rich, but it did not. "Should have" + past participle describes an expectation that was not fulfilled.
5	Any reasonable guess, e.g. "The stones might have been used as a calendar."

Worksheet 3 – Part B (Conversation)

#	Answer	Why
1	might / may / could	A possible explanation.
2	can't	The reminder is evidence against forgetting.
3	must	Deduction from his known habits.
4	might / may / could	A possible past cause.
5	would / should	Expectation about what a reasonable person does.

Marking Guide — Writing Task (Worksheet 3 Part C)

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Range	Uses five or more different modal structures	0–5
Form	Correct: modal + base verb; modal + have + past participle	0–4
Logic	Guesses match the evidence; strong modals used only with strong evidence	0–3
Task	Within 80–100 words; clear and coherent	0–3

Teacher Notes — Common B1 Problems

- **"Must have had" confusion.** Learners write "must had been" or "must have had been". Drill the fixed frame: modal + **have** + past participle. Nothing else changes.
- **"Mustn't" still appears** at B1 for negative deduction. This is the most persistent error in the whole area — many European languages map their negated necessity modal directly onto it. Contrast explicitly with prohibition.
- **"Should have" ambiguity.** It can mean an unfulfilled expectation ("The parcel should have arrived") or criticism ("You should have told me"). Context decides; make sure learners can produce both.
- **Must vs have to.** Learners may confuse the deduction *must* with the obligation *have to*. Note that only *must* works for deduction: "He has to be tired" is possible but far less natural than "He must be tired".
- **Building to B2.** Once these are secure, introduce *may well*, *is bound to* and *is likely to* as ways of fine-tuning probability.