

Evidence: Past modals

by Jill Hadfield

Level: Upper intermediate**Target age:** Secondary / Adult**Time needed:** 20 minutes**Grammar objective:** to practise *may / might / could / must / can't have***Materials:** one set of evidence cards and one set of suspect pictures per group of three or four students**Summary:** a group information-gap activity to practise past modals**Before the lesson**

Print a set of the evidence cards for each group of three or four students. Cut the cards up. The activity is easiest / more logical if each group's set is arranged in a pile so that the first card they turn up is number 1 and so on, but this is not vital – in fact, a mixed order may lead to more language as they rework hypotheses they made earlier on the basis of new evidence.

Procedure

1. Give each group a set of cards and ask them to place them face down in the centre of the table.
2. Tell the class that a house has been burgled. They have clues on the cards and must make deductions about how the house was burgled and who the thief is based on the clues on the cards.
3. Depending on how practised your class is in the use of modal verbs to make deductions about the past, you may want to pre-teach or elicit the following before students start the activity:

must + have + past participle – when we feel sure something happened in the past
e.g. *He must have come by car.*

may/might/could + have + past participle – when we think something possibly happened in the past
e.g. *He might have come by car.*

can't + have + past participle – when we feel sure something did *not* happen in the past
e.g. *He can't have come by car.*

modal verb + *have + been + -ing* – the continuous form

e.g. *It might have been raining.*

4. Players take it in turns to take a card from the pile and read it out to the group. The group should then make deductions based on the evidence.

For example:

A: [Student reads] 'There were very large, muddy footprints on the floor.'

B: It must have been a man!

C: No, it could have been a woman with big feet!

D: And it must have been raining.

5. When they have finished, give them the picture of the four suspects. They should discuss who it could have been. For example, 'It could have been number 1. He has a bandaged wrist.' – 'No, it can't have been number 1. There were no fingerprints, so he must have been wearing gloves.'

6. Check answers with the class. Let them explain who they suspect and why. (It is most likely to have been suspect number 3.)

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FUN WITH GRAMMAR EVIDENCE CARDS

1. The window was broken, but the door was locked.	2. A small piece of blue material was found by the window.	3. There was blood on the broken window.	4. There were large muddy footprints on the floor.
5. There was a large vase on the mantelpiece. It is not there any more.	6. There was a large painting on the wall. It is not there any more.	7. The painting was the only item missing.	8. There were pieces of broken china on the floor.
9. There was a Paris metro ticket on the floor.	10. There was a handkerchief on the floor.	11. There were no fingerprints.	12. There were tyre marks on the ground outside.
13. There was a magnifying glass on the mantelpiece.	14. There was a mobile phone with lots of Paris numbers.	15. There was a text message on the phone saying, 'How was the football? When will you be home?'	16. The text message was sent at 7.00pm.
17. Some red paint was found on the gate to the driveway.	18. A red Citroën car was seen driving very fast towards Dover at about 8pm.	19. You can catch a car ferry from Dover to France.	20. The police checked the ferries to France between 10pm and midnight. They did not find a red Citroën car.



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FUN WITH GRAMMAR
SUSPECT PICTURES

