

Lecture 02

Model verbs: possibility

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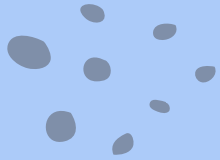




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Present
possibility

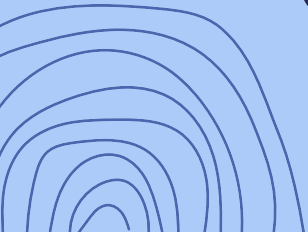
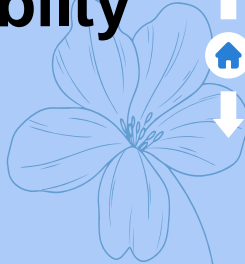
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Quick
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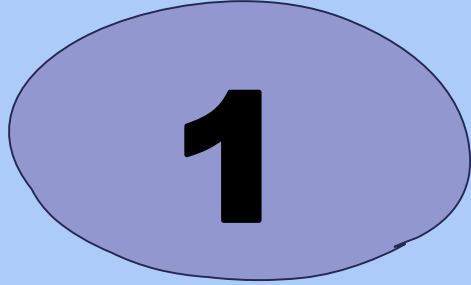
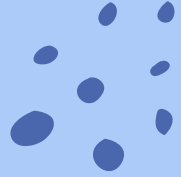




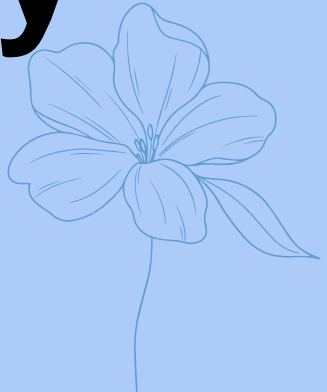
Quote

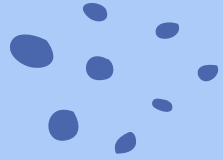
*"Maybe you **can not** do great things but
you **can do** small things With great
love. " Mother Theresa*





Present possibility



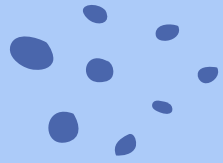


Present possibility

- We use can to talk about things which are generally possible:

Health insurance **can be** very expensive.

(= It is sometimes expensive.)



possibility vs Ability

1. Children **can't** concentrate for long periods of time.=
2. Anyone **can** win this competition. All the participants are very good.=

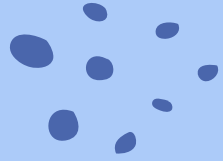
Present possibility



Formality Check

- We commonly use **may** in academic and scientific English
 - Over-prescribing of antibiotics **may** lead to the rapid development of resistant strains.





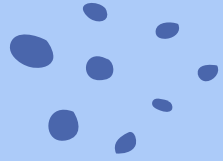
Present possibility

specific possibilities:

- This rash **may/might/could** be a symptom of something more serious.



- Mark isn't home yet-he **may/might/could** be working late at the office.





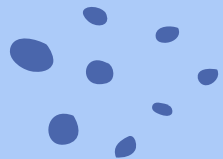
Present possibility

specific possibilities:



Check

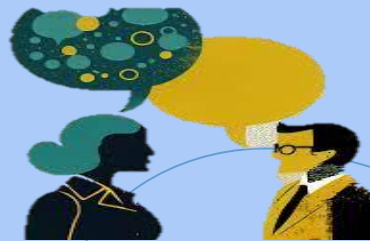
- a)  ~~There can be life on Mars.~~
- b)  There may be life on Mars.

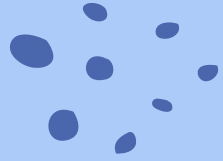


Present possibility

How to ask questions about possibilities?

- Do you think the shops **might be** open today?



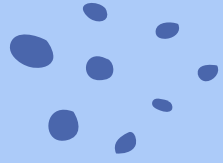


Present possibility

How to talk about a strong possibility?

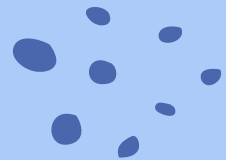
- Don't worry, the payment could well be in the post.

(= It is probably in the post.)



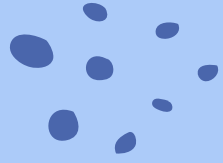
Present possibility

- To describe possibilities which depend on certain conditions we use **could** or **might**
- She could learn much more quickly **if** she paid attention.



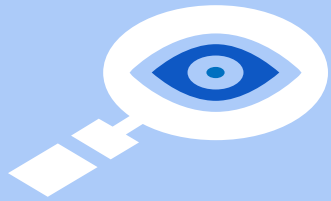
Present possibility

- ✓ When we think that something is POSSIBLY NOT the case we use **might not or may not:**
 - The shops may not/ might not be open today; it's a public holiday.



Present possibility

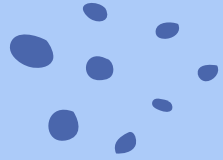
- ✓ When we are certain something is **DEFINITELY NOT** the case, we use **can't**:
 - You really can't drive to Ouargla in under an hour. (I'm sure about this, it's **impossible.**)



notice!

Match sentences 1-3 with
The right meaning a-c





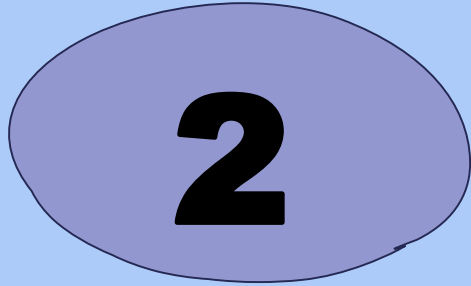
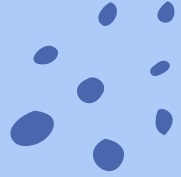
Present possibility

1. Anna must be at home.
 2. She may be at home.
 3. She can't be at home.
- a) I'm not sure but it's possible.
 - b) I'm sure.
 - c) . I'm sure. It's impossible.

Present possibility

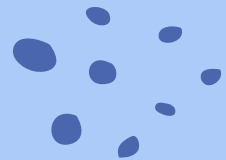
Key answer

1. **Anna must be at home.**
 2. **She may be at home.**
 3. **She can't be at home**
- a) **I'm sure.**
 - b) **I'm not sure but it's possible.**
 - c) **. I'm sure. It's impossible.**



Future possibility

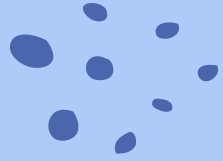




Future possibility

□ future possibility or impossibility
(will/won't be able):

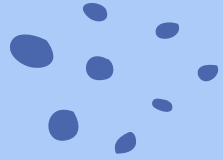
➤ We will be able to get a coffee at the theatre but we won't be able to eat until after the show.



Future possibility

□ less certain-future action
(may/might/could):

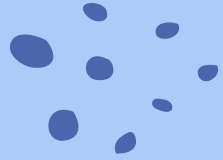
- The directors may call a stockholders' meeting. (= *Perhaps they will call a meeting.*)



Future possibility

□ weaker possibility (could)

- You never know, she **could** find a perfect job tomorrow. (It's possible, but unlikely.)



Future possibility



- ❑ do not use ~~could not/couldn't~~ to say something is definitely impossible in the present or future:

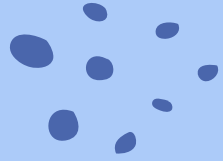
Future possibility

sth is definitely impossible in the present or future

 ~~The optician **couldn't** see you tomorrow.~~

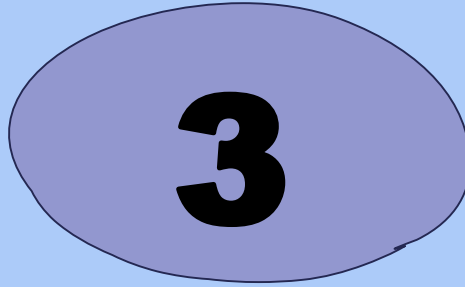
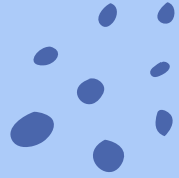
 The optician **won't be able** to see you tomorrow.

 The optician **can't** see you tomorrow.



Future possibility

- ❑ a possible completed action by a time in the future
- Call me next Tuesday; I might have finished the project by then.
(may/might+ have + past)



Past possibility



Past possibility

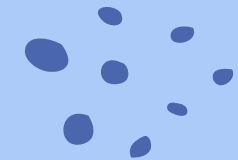
Formality Check

❑ academic/ scientific English

= might:

- Wealthy Victorian families might employ as many as a dozen indoor servants.

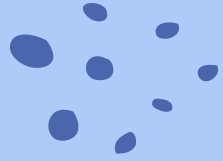




Past possibility

□ general possibility in the past
= could

Teachers could be very strict at my old school.
(= Sometimes they were strict.)

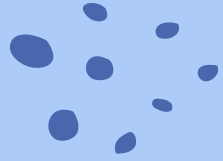


Past possibility

❑ (could/might+ have+ past participle)
specific past possibility

- She **might have done** it; she had the opportunity and the motive. (= Perhaps she did it.)
- John **could have posted** the letter.(I'm not sure whether he did or not.)

could/might+ have+ past



Past possibility

□ (could/might+ have+ past participle)
past opportunity (not taken)

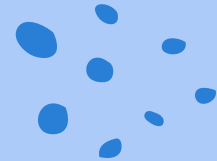
➤ I might have gone to drama school, but I chose history instead.

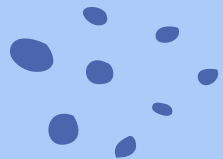
(= I had the opportunity but I didn't go.)



choose!

The right option/s





Past possibility

1. They know the way here. They.....

a) can't have got lost!

b) May have got lost

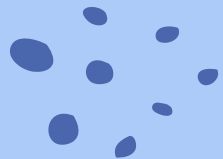
c) Can have got lost

2. If Jones was at work until six, hethe murder.

a) May

b) might

c) couldn't have done.



Past possibility

Key Answer

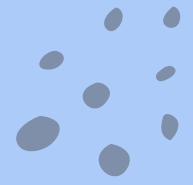
1.They know the way here. They **can't have got** lost!

2.If Jones was at work until six, he **couldn't have done** the murder

(=past event was impossible)



3



Quick practice



What do the modal verb express

- 1 The accident **could have killed** you.
- 2 When I was a child, I **couldn't** play soccer very well.
- 3 I don't know where he is. He **may (might)** be in his office.
- 4 The shop **may (might) give** us a discount in the next purchase.

Key Answers

1. The accident could have killed you. **Possibility not true.**
2. When I was a child, I couldn't play soccer very well. **Past ability**
3. I don't know where he is. He may (might) be in his office.
4. The shop may (might) give us a discount in the next purchase. **=Indicate an UNCERTAIN ACTION**



Thanks!



Do you have any questions?

