

UNIT 10

▶ Modal auxiliary verbs 2

Modal auxiliary verbs of probability in the past

- All modal auxiliary verbs can be used with the perfect infinitive. They express varying degrees of certainty. *Will have done* is the most certain, and *might/may/could have done* is the least certain.
'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.
The music can't have been any good. Nobody danced.
Where's Pete? He should have been here ages ago!
He may have got lost.
He might have decided not to come.
He could have had an accident.
- Would have thought* is common to express an assumption or supposition.
I'd have thought they'd be here by now. Where are they?
You'd have thought she'd remember my birthday, wouldn't you?
Wouldn't you have thought they'd ring if there was a problem?

Other uses of modal verbs in the past

should have done

- Should have done* can express advice or criticism about a past event. The sentence expresses what is contrary to the facts.
You should have listened to my advice. (You didn't listen.)
I shouldn't have lied to you. I'm sorry. (I did lie.)
You shouldn't have told her you hated her. (You did tell her.)
- Look at these sentences.
You should have been here yesterday!
You should have seen his face!
Should have done is used here for comic effect. The suggestion is because it was so funny!

could have done

- Could have done* is used to express an unrealized past ability. Someone was able to do something in the past, but didn't do it.
I could have gone to university, but I didn't want to.
We could have won the match. We didn't try hard enough.
I could have told you that Chris wouldn't come. He hates parties.
- It is used to express a past possibility that didn't happen.
You fool! You could have killed yourself!
We were lucky. We could have been caught in that traffic jam.
When I took the burnt meal out of the oven, I could have cried!
- It is used to criticize people for not doing things.
You could have told me that Sue and Jim had split up!
I've been cleaning the house for hours. You could at least have done your bedroom!

might have done

- The above use of *could have done* can also be expressed with *might have done*.
You might have helped instead of just sitting on your backside!
- I might have known/guessed that ...* is used to introduce a typical action of someone or something.
I might have known that Peter would be late. He's always late.
The car won't start. I might have guessed that would happen.

needn't have

- Needn't have done* expresses an action that was done, but it wasn't necessary. It was a waste of time.
I needn't have got up so early. The train was delayed.
'I've bought you a new pen, because I lost yours.' *'You needn't have bothered. I've got hundreds.'*

UNIT 11

▶ Hypothesizing

First and second conditionals

- First conditional sentences are based on fact in real time. They express a possible condition and its probable result.
If you pass your exams, I'll buy you a car.
- Second conditional sentences are not based on fact. They express a situation which is contrary to reality in the present and future. This unreality is shown by a tense shift from present to past. They express a hypothetical condition and its probable result.
If I were taller, I'd join the police force.
What would you do if you won the lottery?

Notes

- The difference between first and second conditional sentences is not about time. Both can refer to the present and future. By using past tense forms in the second conditional, the speaker suggests the situation is less probable, impossible, or imaginary.
Compare the pairs of sentences.
If it rains this weekend, we'll ... (said in England where it often rains)
If it rained in the Sahara, it would ... (this would be most unusual)
If global warming continues, we'll ... (I'm a pessimist.)
If global warming continued, we'd ... (I'm an optimist.)
If you come to my country, you'll have a good time. (possible)
If you came from my country, you'd understand us better. (unlikely)
If I am elected as a member of Parliament, I'll ... (real candidate)
If I ruled the world, I'd ... (imaginary)
- We can use *were* instead of *was*, especially in a formal style.
If the situation were the opposite, would you feel obliged to help?

Third conditional

- Third conditional sentences are not based on fact. They express a situation which is contrary to reality in the past. This unreality is shown by a tense shift from Past Simple to Past Perfect.
If you'd come to the party, you'd have had a great time.
I wouldn't have met my wife if I hadn't gone to France.
- It is possible for each of the clauses in a conditional sentence to have a different time reference, and the result is a mixed conditional.
If we had eaten (we didn't), we wouldn't be hungry (we are).
I wouldn't have married her (I did) if I didn't love her (I do).

Other structures that express hypothesis

- The tense usage with *wish*, *if only*, and *I'd rather* is similar to the second and third conditionals. Unreality is expressed by a tense shift.
I wish I were taller. (But I'm not.)
If only you hadn't said that! (But you did.)
I'd rather you didn't wear lots of make-up. (But you do.)
I'd rather you ... is often used as a polite way to tell someone to do something differently. The negative form *I'd rather you didn't ...* is especially useful as a polite way to say 'no'.
'I'll come in with you.' *'I'd rather you waited outside.'*
'Can I smoke in here?' *'I'd rather you didn't.'*

Notes

- wish ... would* can express regret, dissatisfaction, impatience, or irritation because someone WILL keep doing something.
I wish you'd stop smoking.
I wish you'd do more to help in the house.
- If we are not talking about willingness, *wish ... would* is not used.
I wish my birthday wasn't in December. (**I wish it would be ...*)
I wish I could stop smoking. (**I wish I would* is strange because you should have control over what you are willing to do.)
I wish he would stop smoking.
This is correct because it means *I wish he were willing to ...*