

62 Possibility

Modal verbs can be used to talk about possibility, or to express uncertainty. "Might" is the most common modal verb used for this purpose.

See also:

Present simple **1** Infinitives and participles **51**

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62.1 "MIGHT" FOR POSSIBILITY

"Might" can be added to different phrases to refer to past, present, or future possibilities.

PAST POSSIBILITY

"MIGHT" + "HAVE" + PAST PARTICIPLE

I can't find the compass. I **might have dropped** it earlier.



PRESENT POSSIBILITY

"MIGHT" + BASE FORM

I don't remember this path. We **might be lost**.



FUTURE POSSIBILITY

"MIGHT" + "BASE FORM" + FUTURE TIME

It's very cold outside. It **might snow** later on.



FURTHER EXAMPLES

We **might have taken** a wrong turn at the river.



It **might be** windy at the top of the mountain.



"Not" always comes after
"might" to form the negative.

Joe **might not come** walking with us next weekend.



TIP

Questions with "might" are only used in very formal English.

62.2 "MIGHT" WITH UNCERTAINTY

Other phrases can be added to sentences with "might" to emphasize uncertainty about something.



I **might** take the bus home. I'm not sure.

I **don't know**. I **might** have more pizza.



62.3 PAST POSSIBILITY

As well as "might," other modal verbs can be used to talk about something that possibly happened in the past.



The copier isn't working. It **{ might
may
could }** have run out of paper.

[He thinks it is possible that the copier has run out of paper.]

These constructions can be used to talk about something that possibly did not happen in the past.



You **{ might not
may not }** have plugged it in correctly.

[He thinks it is possible that the printer wasn't plugged in correctly.]

"Could not" can only be used when the speaker is certain that something did not happen.



You **couldn't have** changed the ink correctly.

[He is certain that the ink wasn't changed correctly.]