



Lesson21

The Use of May and Might

I. RULES AND EXAMPLES

1. We use may or might to say that something is a possibility. Usually you can use may or might, so you can say:

1. It may be true. or It might be true.
2. She might know. or She may know.

The negative forms are may not and might not (or mightn't):

1. It may not be true. (= perhaps it isn't true)
2. She might not work here anymore. (= perhaps she doesn't work here)

Study the structure:

			be (true / in his office etc.)
	may not		be (doing / working / having etc.)
I /you/he (etc.)	might		know / work / want etc.

2. For the past we use may have (done) or might have (done):

Examples:

1. A: I wonder why Kate didn't answer the phone.
B: She may have been sleep. (= perhaps she was asleep)
2. A: I can't find my bag anywhere.
B: You might have left it in the shop. (= perhaps you left it in the shop)
3. A: I was surprised that Kate wasn't at the meeting yesterday.
B: She might not have known about it. (= perhaps she didn't know)
4. A: I wonder why David was in such a bad mood yesterday.

B: He may not have been feeling well. (= perhaps he wasn't feeling well)

Study the structure:

I /you/he (etc.)	may (not) have	been (asleep / at home etc.)
	Might	been (doing / working / feeling etc.)
		known / had / wanted / left etc.

3. Could is similar to may and might:

Example:

1. It's a strange story, but it could be true. (= it may/might be true)
 2. You could have left your bag in the shop. (= you may/might have left it)
- But couldn't (negative) is different from may not and might not.

Compare:

1. Sarah couldn't have got my message. Otherwise she would have replied. (= it is not possible that she got my message)
2. I wonder why Sarah hasn't replied to my message. I suppose she might not have got it. (= perhaps she didn't get it, perhaps she did)

II. EXERCISES

Write these sentences in a different way using might.

Example: Perhaps Helen is in her office.

Answer : Helen / She might be in her office.

Start here:

1. Perhaps Helen is busy.
2. Perhaps she is working.
3. Perhaps she wants to be alone.
4. Perhaps she was ill yesterday.
5. Perhaps she went home early.
6. Perhaps she had to go home early.
7. Perhaps she was working yesterday.

In sentences 8-10 use might not.

8. Perhaps she doesn't want to see me.
9. Perhaps she isn't working today.
10. Perhaps she wasn't feeling well yesterday.

Read the situation and make sentences from the words in brackets. Use might.

Example: I can't find Jeff anywhere. I wonder where he is.

a. (he / go / shopping) b. (he / play / tennis)

Answer : a. He might have gone shopping

b. He might be playing tennis.

Start here:

1. I'm looking for Sarah. Do you know where she is?

a. (she / watch / TV / in her room) _____.

b. (she / go / out) _____.

3. I can't find my umbrella. Have you seen it?

a. (it / be / in the car) _____.

b. (you / leave / in the restaurant last night) _____.

4. Why didn't Dave answer the doorbell? I'm sure he was at home at the time.

a. (he / go / to bed early) _____.

b. (he / not / hear / the doorbell) _____.

c. (he / be / in the shower) _____.

Complete the sentences using might not have ... or couldn't have ...

Example: A: Do you think Sarah got the message we sent her?

B: No, she would have contacted us. _____.

Answer : She couldn't have got it.

Example: A: I was surprised Kate wasn't at the meeting. Perhaps she didn't know about it.

B: That's possible. _____.

Answer : She might not have known about it.

Start here:

1. A: I wonder why they never replied to our letter. Do you think they received it?

B: Maybe not. They _____.

2. A: I wonder how the fire started. Was it an accident?

B: No, the police say it _____.

3. A: Mike says he needs to see you. He tried to find you yesterday.

B: Well, he _____ very hard. I was in my office all day.

4. A: The man you spoke to – are you sure he was American?

B: No, I'm not sure. He _____.

III. WRITING

Write sentences with **might**.

Example: (it's possible that I'll go to the cinema)

Answer : I might go to the cinema.

Start here:

1. (it's possible that I'll see you tomorrow)
_____.
2. (it's possible that Ann will forget to phone)
_____.
3. (it's possible that it will snow today) _____.
4. (it's possible that I'll be late tonight) _____.

Write sentences with **might not**.

5. (it's possible that Mary will not be here) _____.
6. (it's possible that I won't have time to meet you) _____.

IV. FREE TALKING

Giving instructions:

Try to give instructions on the following:

1. Tell how to feed family members who drop by unexpectedly.
2. Tell how to dump a boyfriend/girlfriend.
3. Tell how to get from your house to the supermarket

