

May and might (2)

A

We use **may** and **might** to talk about possible actions or happenings in the future:

- I haven't decided what I'm doing for spring break. I **may** go to Mexico. (= perhaps I will go to Mexico)
- Take an umbrella with you when you go out. It **might** rain later. (= perhaps it will rain)
- The bus doesn't always come on time. We **might have to** wait a few minutes.

The negative forms are **may not** and **might not**:

- Ann **may not** go out tonight. She isn't feeling well. (= perhaps she will not go out)
- There **might not** be a meeting on Friday because the director is sick.

B

Usually it doesn't matter whether you use **may** or **might**. So you can say:

- I **may** go to Mexico. or I **might** go to Mexico.
- Lisa **might** be able to help you. or Lisa **may** be able to help you.

But we use only **might** (*not may*) when the situation is not real:

- If I knew them better, I **might** invite them to dinner.
(The situation here is not real because I don't know them very well, so I'm not going to invite them. **May** is not possible in this example.)

C

There is also a continuous form: **may/might be -ing**. Compare this with **will be -ing**:

- Don't phone me at 8:30. I'll **be watching** the baseball game on TV.
- Don't phone me at 8:30. I **might be watching** (or I **may be watching**) the baseball game on TV. (= perhaps I'll be watching it)

For **will be -ing**, see Unit 23.

We also use **may/might be -ing** for possible plans. Compare:

- I'm **going** to Mexico in July. (for sure)
- I **may be going** (or I **might be going**) to Mexico in July. (possible)

But you can also say "I **may go** (or I **might go**) to Mexico" with little difference in meaning.

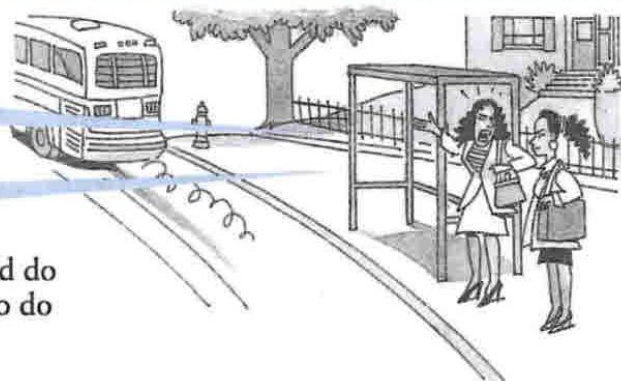
D

Might as well / may as well

Rosa and Maria have just missed the bus.
The buses run every hour.

What should we do? Should we walk?

We **might as well**. It's a nice day, and I don't want to wait here for an hour.



We **might as well** do something = We should do something because there is nothing better to do and there is no reason not to do it.

You can also say **may as well**.

- A: What time are you going?
B: Well, I'm ready, so I **might as well** go now.
- Rents are so high these days, you **may as well** buy a house.

Exercises

29.1 Write sentences with *may* or *might*.

- Where are you going for spring break? (to Mexico???)
I haven't decided yet. I may go to Mexico.
- What kind of car are you going to buy? (a Toyota???)
I'm not sure yet. I _____.
- Where are you going to hang that picture? (in the dining room???)
I haven't made up my mind yet. _____.
- When is Jim coming to see us? (on Saturday???)
I don't know yet. _____.
- What is Julia going to do when she graduates from high school? (go to college???)
She hasn't decided yet. _____.

29.2 Complete the sentences using *might* + one of these verbs:

bite break need ~~rain~~ slip wake

- Take an umbrella with you when you go out. It might rain _____ later.
- Don't make too much noise. You _____ the baby.
- Watch out for that dog. It _____ you.
- I don't think we should throw that letter away. We _____ it later.
- Be careful. The sidewalk is very icy. You _____.
- I don't want the children to play in this room. They _____ something.

29.3 Complete the sentences using *might be able to* or *might have to* + an appropriate verb.

- I can't help you, but why don't you ask Liz? She might be able to help _____ you.
- I can't meet you tonight, but I _____ you tomorrow night.
- I'm not working on Saturday, but I _____ on Sunday.
- Michael is very sick. He _____ to the hospital.

29.4 Read the situations and write sentences with *may not* or *might not*.

- You don't know if Ann will come to the party.
Ann may not come to the party.
- You don't know if you'll go out this evening.
I _____.
- You don't know if Sam will like the present you bought for him.
Sam _____.
- You don't know if Sue will be able to meet you tonight.
_____.

29.5 Read the situations and make sentences with *may/might as well*.

- You and a friend have just missed the bus. The buses run every hour. You say:
We'll have to wait an hour for the next bus. We might as well walk.
- You have a free ticket for a concert. You're not very excited about the concert but you decide to go. You say: I _____ to the concert. It's a shame to waste a free ticket.
- You and a friend were thinking of eating in a restaurant, but you have a lot of food in the refrigerator. You say: We _____ at home. There's a lot of food in the fridge.
- You and a friend are at home. You are bored. There's a movie on TV starting in a few minutes. You say: _____ . There's nothing else to do.