



# Learn English Through Stories

T Series

Upper - Intermediate

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## Modal Verbs 3 by K S Sandhu

### A Man with No Name

It was a quiet Monday evening. Sarah and her friend Tom were sitting in a small café, drinking coffee and reading the local newspaper. Suddenly, Sarah looked up with a surprised expression.

“Tom, did you read about the ‘man with no name’? It’s really strange,” she said.

“No, what happened?” Tom replied, leaning forward.

Sarah began to explain. “Yesterday, the police found a man walking along the beach. He looked completely bewildered and disoriented. He couldn’t remember his name, his age, or where he lived. The newspaper says he might have amnesia.”

Tom thought for a moment. “He must have had a car accident or something. That would explain the memory loss.”

Sarah shook her head. “No, he couldn’t have. The doctors checked him carefully. He doesn’t have any injuries at all. He seems healthy, just very confused.”

“Maybe he has been suffering from stress,” Tom suggested. “Or he might have fallen and hit his head earlier, even if there are no marks now.”

Sarah continued reading. “The police asked him many questions, but he only spoke in fluent English with a local accent. So he can’t have been an illegal immigrant.”

Tom nodded. “That’s interesting. What about his possessions? He must have had a wallet, a phone, or some keys, right?”

“Nothing,” Sarah answered. “He wasn’t carrying anything. The police should have found something by now, but they haven’t.”

Tom looked thoughtful. “His things might have been stolen. Or perhaps he could have left them somewhere before he got lost.”

“The police must have checked the missing persons records already,” Sarah said. “But they didn’t find a match. It’s a real mystery.”

They sat in silence for a few seconds. Then Tom asked, “Do you think he might have run away from something? Family problems, maybe?”

Sarah replied, "It's possible, but the doctors don't think so. They hypothesize that something sudden happened to his memory. He seems calm now, but he must have experienced something very upsetting."

Just then, Sarah's phone rang. It was her cousin, who worked at the hospital.

"Sarah! You won't believe this," her cousin said excitedly. "The man with no name? He just remembered his name – it's David! He must have been in a big argument with his wife that morning. He walked out, left everything behind, and wandered for hours. The stress might have caused temporary amnesia."

Sarah smiled and told Tom the news. "See? We were making lots of guesses, but the truth was simpler than we thought."

Tom laughed. "Well, next time something like this happens, we shouldn't jump to conclusions too quickly!"

Questions:

Question 1: Where were Sarah and Tom when they talked about the newspaper story?

Question 2: What did the police find on the beach?

Question 3: Why did Tom think the man must have had a car accident?

Question 4: According to Sarah, why couldn't the man have been in a car accident?

Question 5: What did the man sound like when he spoke English?

Question 6: What did Sarah and Tom think might have happened to the man's possessions?

Question 7: What did the police check but not find any match for?

Question 8: What was the real reason for the man's memory loss?

Question 9: Who called Sarah with the news about the man's identity?

Question 10: What advice did Tom give at the end of the story?

Answers

Answer 1: They were sitting in a small café drinking coffee.

Answer 2: They found a confused man who couldn't remember his name or where he was from.

Answer 3: Because he thought that would explain the memory loss.

Answer 4: Because the doctors said he had no injuries at all.

Answer 5: He spoke fluent English with a local accent.

Answer 6: They thought his things might have been stolen or that he could have left them somewhere.

Answer 7: They checked the missing persons records.

Answer 8: He had a big argument with his wife, left everything behind, and the stress caused temporary amnesia.

Answer 9: Her cousin, who worked at the hospital.

Answer 10: We shouldn't jump to conclusions too quickly.

## 48 Making a guess (2)

### *must, might, could, should + have*



### 1 Past forms

The perfect form of modal verbs is modal verb + *have* + past participle:

POSITIVE	<i>I might have (might've*) seen him. You should have (should've) been there. She must have (must've) done it.</i>
NEGATIVE	<i>I cannot (can't) have lost it. He might not (mightn't) have stopped. We could not (couldn't) have known.*</i>
QUESTIONS	<i>Could you have known? (No, I couldn't (have).) Should they have left? (Yes, they should (have).) What could she have done? Where should we have gone?</i>

\* In spoken English we sometimes use short forms, e.g. *should've, shouldn't've, mightn't've*, etc.

### Pronunciation > 1.24

There is also a continuous form, modal verb + *have + been + -ing*:

*He must have been driving too fast. They couldn't have been watching us.*

### 2 Making a guess about a past situation

If we're certain that our guess is correct we use *must, can't* or *couldn't + have + past participle*:

*Everything's pink! You must have put something red in the machine.*

*I can't have. I always wash whites separately.*


*Lester couldn't have been driving the car – he doesn't even own a car!*

If we are less certain, we use *may (not), might (not)* or *could + have + past participle*:

*'Where are the keys?' 'I don't know; I may have left them in the car.'*

*'Why isn't Ali here yet?' 'I don't know. Could he have forgotten the date?'*

*'Why haven't they phoned me back?' 'They might not have been getting their messages.'*

 We use *mightn't have + past participle*, NOT *couldn't have + past participle*, if we are not certain:

*I'm not sure; ✓ I mightn't have passed the exam. (= It's possible that I haven't passed it.)*

*✗ I couldn't have passed the exam.*

### 3 Expectations about the past

We can talk about things we expected to happen in the past with *should + have + past participle*:

*Check the post. That letter should have arrived by now.*

*You'd better phone the hospital. They should have had the test results this morning.*

We can also use this form for an action that was planned but didn't happen:

*We should have had our exam results last week, but they haven't arrived yet.*

*I should have gone swimming last Friday but the pool was closed for repairs.*

Note that *was/were meant to* or *was/were supposed to* have a similar meaning:

*The plane was meant to leave at six but there was a mechanical problem.*

*I was supposed to send her my email address but I forgot.*

## Practice

## 1 Use the words below to write sentences and questions that make guesses about the past.

🔊 3.30 Listen and check.

- 0 could / she / come / on the earlier bus? *Could she have come on the earlier bus?*
- 1 Jackie / might / miss / the train .....
- 2 they / should / get home / by now .....
- 3 might / the children / stay / late at school? .....
- 4 I / must / leave the keys / in my coat pocket .....
- 5 Carol / might not / receive / your email .....

## 2 Choose the best meaning, A or B.

- 0 Sally might have taken the children to the park.  
A I'm sure this happened. **B** I'm not sure this happened.
- 1 It must have been a wonderful party!  
A I went to the party. B I didn't go to the party.
- 2 Ellen can't have been there.  
A I'm sure about this. B I'm not sure about this.
- 3 Check your computer. They should have sent the email yesterday.  
A I think they sent an email. B I don't think they sent an email.
- 4 That's a pity. They might not have known about it.  
A They didn't know about it. B I don't know whether they knew about it or not.

## 3 GRAMMAR IN USE Choose the correct answer, A, B or C below. 🔊 3.31 Listen and check.

- GABY Did you read about the 'man with no name' in the paper?  
NICK No, what was the story?  
GABY The police found this very confused man walking on the beach.  
He (0) ..... remember his name or where he was from.  
NICK He (1) ..... a car accident or something.  
GABY No, he (2) ..... He doesn't have any injuries.  
NICK Well, he (3) ..... suffering from some sort of memory loss ...  
GABY Maybe. But he seemed to be quite healthy.  
NICK What about his personal possessions? He (4) ..... a wallet or something.  
GABY No, he wasn't carrying anything.  
NICK They (5) ..... stolen by someone.  
GABY I suppose so. But the police don't seem to think that was the case.  
NICK How strange. (6) ..... an illegal immigrant?  
GABY No. He (7) ..... He spoke to the police in fluent English, with a local accent.  
NICK Don't the police have any idea who he is? I mean, they (8) ..... looked at their missing persons records.  
GABY Yes, but they didn't find a match. It's a real mystery ...

- |                         |                   |                          |
|-------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|
| 0 A couldn't have       | <b>B</b> couldn't | C must                   |
| 1 A must have had       | B must have       | C might have been having |
| 2 A could have          | B might have      | C couldn't have          |
| 3 A must have           | B might have been | C can't have been        |
| 4 A must have had       | B shouldn't have  | C couldn't have had      |
| 5 A could being         | B must to be      | C might have been        |
| 6 A Could he have been  | B Might be he     | C Could he being         |
| 7 A shouldn't have been | B should be       | C can't have been        |
| 8 A mightn't have been  | B must have       | C shouldn't have         |

## Answers

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- 1** 1 Jackie might have/might've missed the train.  
2 They should have/should've got home by now.  
3 Might the children have stayed late at school?  
4 I must have/must've left the keys in my coat pocket.  
5 Carol might not have/mightn't have received your email.

**2** 1 B 2 A 3 A 4 B

**3** 1 A 2 C 3 B 4 A 5 C 6 A 7 C 8 B