

## PAST MODALS

We use past modals to express a possibility in the past and to give advice or a suggestion to a past situation.

We have the following chart according to probability or according to the amount of information we have.

**WOULD HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE** (the most like thing we would do if certain condition had been meant in the past).

**COULD HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE** (something that had a reasonable probability to happen in the past if certain condition had met).

**MIGHT HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE** (something that had a very remote probability to have happened in the past if certain condition had been met).

**SHOULD HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE** (we use this structure when we give advice for a past situation or to give our personal point of view about a past situation).

**MUST HAVE + PAST PARTICIPLE** (we use this structure to affirm something that we take for granted happened, base on information or to give a logical statement).

we use the contracted form especially when in speech.

WOULD'VE

COULD'VE

MIGHT'VE

SHOULD'VE

The structure is as follows:

**SUBJECT + MODAL VERB + HAVE + VERB IN PAST PARTICIPLE + COMPLEMENTIZER**

Examples of possibilities in the past:

Peter went to the party. (100% sure)

Peter must have gone to the party because he wanted to go and he isn't at home now. (100% possibility)

In the first example, the speaker is 100% certain that Peter is at the party even though no reason was given. In the second example, the speaker is not completely certain, but they have a very strong reason to believe what they are saying.

The launch of the rocket was called off because something happened to the engine. (100% sure)

Something could/might/may have happened to the engine of the rocket because they called the launch off. (50% possibility)

In the first example, the speaker is absolutely certain why the rocket launch was called off. Maybe there was confirmation by the scientists or flight engineers. In the second example, the speaker doesn't have enough information of why the launch was called off, they are only speculating.

Ralph wasn't at the meeting because he called and said he had problems with his car. (100% sure)

Ralph wasn't at the meeting because he could/might/may have had problems with his car. (50% possibility.) In the first example, the speaker is certain of what happened to Ralph because they spoke to Ralph directly. In the following example, they are only guessing what happened to Ralph.

Examples of suggestions or advice regarding a past situation. In this case we only use the modal verbs should, ought to and could.

The structure is as follows:

**SUBJECT + MODAL VERB + HAVE + VERB IN PAST PARTICIPLE + COMPLEMENT**

Situation 1:

Your friend took his father's car without permission. They got into an accident with the car. You tell your friend, "You shouldn't have taken your father's car without his permission."

Situation 2:

My friends wanted to go to the beach, but the roads were a mess from the heavy rains. Now they are sad because they are having a boring weekend.

I would say to them, "You guys could have gone to the mountains instead."

Situation 3:

My friend's briefcase was in their car. Now it has disappeared.

I would say to them, "You ought to have taken it with you."

Note: With the modal verb "ought to" you must use "to".



Select the correct form of the **modal verb plus the present perfect** tense to complete the sentences. Pay attention to the subject of the sentence.

1. My mother \_\_\_\_\_ she was sick.  
a. should have told                      b. should have tell                      c. should has tell
2. You \_\_\_\_\_ the exam.  
a. should have finish                      b. should have finishing                      c. should have finished
3. They \_\_\_\_\_ to our party. They certainly had the time.  
a. could have came                      b. could have come                      c. could have coming
4. You \_\_\_\_\_ so early.  
a. Shouldn't have come                      b. shouldn't have came                      c. shouldn't have coming
5. He \_\_\_\_\_ to the movies. He asked if I wanted to go with him.  
a. might have gone                      b. might had gone                      c. might have went
6. We \_\_\_\_\_ the game if we had played better.  
a. could had won                      b. could have win                      c. could have won
7. I \_\_\_\_\_ really distracted when I made that mistake.  
a. must have being                      b. must had been                      c. must have been
8. You \_\_\_\_\_ the job. It sounds really good.  
a. should have taken                      b. should had taken                      c. should have took
9. He \_\_\_\_\_ lost. We've been waiting for him for a long time.  
a. must have getting                      b. must have gotten                      c. must had got
10. You \_\_\_\_\_ your father's car without his permission.  
a. shouldn't have taken                      b. shouldn't have took                      c. shouldn't had taken

11. We \_\_\_\_\_ that bus. It is the last one according to the schedule.

- a. should have taken                      b. should have take                      c. should have took

12. It \_\_\_\_\_ love, but it is over now.

- a. Must have being                      b. must have been                      c. must had been

13. We \_\_\_\_\_ more of this wine. It is really good.

- a. should have buy                      b. should had bought                      c. should have bought

14. They \_\_\_\_\_ by plane. It is faster than the bus.

- a. Should have come                      b. should had came                      c. should have coming

15. I \_\_\_\_\_ the contest if you hadn't entered.

- a. could have won                      b. could have win                      c. could had won

16. She \_\_\_\_\_ fired for the mistake she made.

- a. might have get                      b. might have gotten                      c. might had gotten

17. They \_\_\_\_\_ that comment.

- a. shouldn't have make.                      b. shouldn't have making                      c. shouldn't have made

18. They \_\_\_\_\_ to cancel their appointment.

- a. could had call                      b. could have called                      c. could have call

19. He \_\_\_\_\_ his job without telling his family.

- a. shouldn't have quit                      b. shouldn't have quited                      c. shouldn't had quit

20. You \_\_\_\_\_ me know where you were going. I was worried about you.

- a. could had letting                      b. could have letted                      c. could have let