

# Must and can't

A Study this example:



You can use **must** to say that you believe something is certain:

- You've been travelling all day. You **must** be tired. (Travelling is tiring and you've been travelling all day, so you **must** be tired.)
- 'Jim is a hard worker.' 'Jim? You **must** be joking. He doesn't do anything.'
- Carol **must** get very bored in her job. She does the same thing every day.
- I'm sure Sally gave me her phone number. I **must** have it somewhere.

You can use **can't** to say that you believe something is not possible:

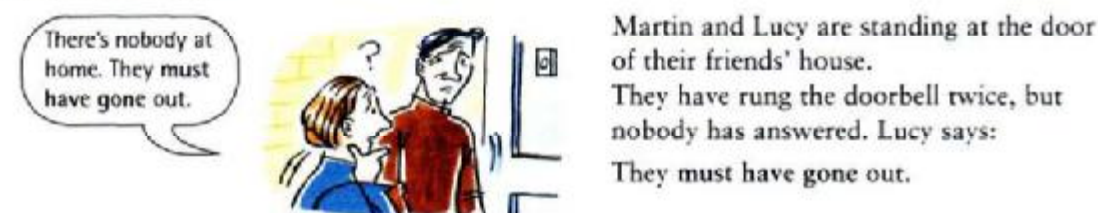
- You've just had lunch. You **can't** be hungry already. (People are not normally hungry just after eating a meal. You've just eaten, so you **can't** be hungry.)
- They haven't lived here for very long. They **can't** know many people.

Study the structure:

I/you/he (etc.)	<b>must</b>	be (tired / hungry / at work etc.)
	<b>can't</b>	be (doing / going / joking etc.) do / get / know / have etc.

B For the past we use **must have (done)** and **can't have (done)**.

Study this example:



- I didn't hear the phone. I **must have been** asleep.
- 'I've lost one of my gloves.' 'You **must have dropped** it somewhere.'
- Sue hasn't contacted me. She **can't have** got my message.
- Tom walked into a wall. He **can't have been** looking where he was going.

Study the structure:

I/you/he (etc.)	<b>must</b>	have	been (asleep / at work etc.)
	<b>can't</b>		been (doing / looking etc.) gone / got / known etc.

You can use **couldn't have** instead of **can't have**:

- Sue **couldn't have** got my message.
- Tom **couldn't have been** looking where he was going.

Can't ('I can't swim' etc.) → Unit 26 Must ('I must go' etc.) → Units 31–32

Modal verbs (can/could/will/would etc.) → Appendix 4 American English → Appendix 7

## 28.1 Put in must or can't.

- 1 You've been travelling all day. You must be tired.
- 2 That restaurant ..... be very good. It's always full of people.
- 3 That restaurant ..... be very good. It's always empty.
- 4 I'm sure I gave you the key. You ..... have it. Have you looked in your bag?
- 5 You're going on holiday next week. You ..... be looking forward to it.
- 6 It rained every day during their holiday, so they ..... have had a very nice time.
- 7 Congratulations on passing your exam. You ..... be very pleased.
- 8 You got here very quickly. You ..... have walked very fast.
- 9 Bill and Sue always travel business class, so they ..... be short of money.

## 28.2 Complete each sentence with a verb (one or two words) in the correct form.

- 1 I've lost one of my gloves. I must have dropped it somewhere.
- 2 They haven't lived here for very long. They can't know many people.
- 3 Ted isn't at work today. He must ..... ill.
- 4 Ted wasn't at work last week. He must ..... ill.
- 5 (*the doorbell rings*) I wonder who that is. It can't ..... Mary. She's still at work at this time.
- 6 Sarah knows a lot about films. She must ..... to the cinema a lot.
- 7 Look. James is putting on his hat and coat. He must ..... out.
- 8 I left my bike outside the house last night and now it has gone. Somebody must ..... it.
- 9 Amy was in a very difficult situation when she lost her job. It can't ..... easy for her.
- 10 There is a man walking behind us. He has been walking behind us for the last twenty minutes. He must ..... us.

## 28.3 Read the situations and use the words in brackets to write sentences with must have and can't have.

- 1 The phone rang, but I didn't hear it. (I / asleep)  
I must have been asleep.
- 2 Sue hasn't contacted me. (she / get / my message)  
She can't have got my message.
- 3 The jacket you bought is very good quality. (it / very expensive)  
.....
- 4 I haven't seen the people next door for ages. (they / go away)  
.....
- 5 I can't find my umbrella. (I / leave / it in the restaurant last night)  
.....
- 6 Dave, who is usually very friendly, walked past me without speaking. (he / see / me)  
.....
- 7 There was a man standing outside the café. (he / wait / for somebody)  
.....
- 8 Liz did the opposite of what I asked her to do. (she / understand / what I said)  
.....
- 9 When I got back to my car, the door was unlocked. (I / forget / to lock it)  
.....
- 10 I was woken up in the night by the noise next door. (the neighbours / have / a party)  
.....
- 11 The light was red, but the car didn't stop. (the driver / see / the red light)  
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