ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

All Modal Verbs Test Exercises – Multiple Choice Questions With Answers – Advanced Level 5

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Explanations

1. I _____ for them but I didn't like the way they treated the customers.
✔ **D) could have worked**
Could have + past participle describes a past possibility that did not happen: the chance to work for them was there, but the speaker refused because of how they treated customers. Not **should have worked**, which would mean it was a mistake not to work there. That contradicts the reason given.

2. Felix _____ a successful academician since he has been offered a scholarship.
✔ **C) must be**
Must be expresses a confident deduction based on evidence. Being offered a scholarship is strong proof that Felix is successful. **Could be** and **may be** only suggest a possibility, which is too weak given the clear evidence. **Is** states a fact and does not show the reasoning signalled by **since**.

3. The exam _____ very difficult, because the students were about to cry when they came out of the classroom.
✔ **A) must have been**
Must have + past participle is a confident deduction about the past. The students almost crying is the evidence, so we conclude the exam **must have been** very difficult. **May/could have been** are too weak for such clear evidence. **Should have been** means it was expected or desirable, which does not fit.

4. If we had been too careful and cautious, we _____ the top of the mountain.
✔ **A) could never have reached**
This is a third conditional about an unreal past: **If + past perfect, … could/would have + past participle**. **We could never have reached the top** means it would not have been possible. Not **would never reach**: the reaching happened in the past, so the perfect form is needed.

5. "I think this scarf belongs to Joan."

"It _____ to her because she doesn't wear a scarf."
✔ **D) could not belong**
For a negative deduction, meaning we are sure something is impossible, British English uses **can't** or **couldn't**: **It couldn't belong to her.** The evidence is that she never wears a scarf. **May not** and **might not** only express a weak possibility. **Needn't** and **doesn't have to** are about necessity, not deduction.

6. "How old do you think Paul is?"

"I've just seen his driver's licence. He _____ 27."
✔ **B) is**
The speaker has just seen Paul's licence, so they know his age for certain. No guess is needed, so the present simple **is** simply states the fact. **Could be** and **may be** would show uncertainty, and **can be** is not used for a possibility about one specific present situation.

7. The bus will leave at 5 o'clock sharp so you _____ late.
✔ **C) mustn't be**
Mustn't expresses prohibition, a strong necessity not to do something: the bus leaves at 5 sharp, so being late is not allowed. **Had better not** would need **be** (**had better not be late**), and **should** has no **be** and is positive. **Needn't be** means it is not necessary, which is the opposite of the meaning.

8. I _____ used to living with six people in the new dormitory room but it took time.
✔ **B) am**
Be used to + -ing describes a current state of being accustomed: **I am used to living with six people.** The clause **but it took time** refers to the earlier process of getting used to it. Not **am getting**, because that shows the process is still going on, which clashes with the past **took**.

9. Mary _____ taking care of herself; she cannot live alone.
✔ **A) is not used to**
Be used to + -ing means 'be accustomed to'. If she **cannot live alone**, she is not accustomed to looking after herself, so the negative **is not used to** fits. **Is used to** gives the opposite meaning. **Gets/will get used to** describe a process, which does not match the present state.

10. When we were in California, we _____ run in the morning throughout the whole summer.
✔ **C) used to**
Used to + infinitive describes a repeated past habit: running every morning that summer. In positive statements the form is **used to**, never **use to**. Not **got used to**, which means 'became accustomed to' and must be followed by -ing (**got used to running**), not the infinitive.

11. I _____ live in the suburbs and I _____ afraid of dogs.
✓ **B) used to / used to be**
Used to works for both past habits or situations (**used to live**) and past states (**used to be afraid**). **Would** can describe repeated past actions, but not states such as **live** or **be afraid**. That is why **would be** and **would/would** are wrong.

12. I _____ longer distances when I was younger.
✓ **B) could swim**
Could + infinitive expresses general ability in the past: **I could swim longer distances when I was younger. Have swum** (present perfect) cannot be used with a finished past time like **when I was younger**. **Can** is present, and **would have swum** refers to an unreal past situation.

13. In her twenties, she _____ work in the garden for hours. Since the operation in her thirties, she cannot do anything.
✓ **C) could**
Could expresses general ability in the past (**in her twenties**), contrasting with her present inability (**cannot**). **Was used to** would need **-ing** and means 'was accustomed to'. **Has been able to** is present perfect, which does not match a finished past period.

14. Whenever I went out, my sister _____ take care of my fish.
✓ **B) would**
Would + infinitive describes a repeated action in the past, often with **whenever**: each time I went out, my sister looked after my fish. **Might** would only suggest a possibility, not a regular habit.

15. You _____ turn off the oven until the food is ready; otherwise, it will be spoilt.
✓ **E) mustn't**
Mustn't expresses prohibition: turning off the oven early is not allowed because the food will be spoilt. **Couldn't**, **wouldn't** and **won't** are about ability, willingness or the future, not prohibition. **Dare not** means being too afraid to do something.

16. I _____ be at the station at 1 p.m. because I was told to meet the guests there.
✓ **B) have to**
Have to expresses an obligation, here one that comes from outside: someone told the speaker to meet the guests, so it is necessary to be at the station at 1 p.m. Not **mustn't** or **needn't**: they mean it is forbidden or unnecessary, which contradicts **I was told to meet the guests there**.

17. _____ we go to the cinema tonight? There is a good film on.
✓ **D) Shall**
Shall we …? is the standard way to make a suggestion: **Shall we go to the cinema?** The second sentence gives the reason for the suggestion. **Will we** asks about the future, and **Can/May we** ask for permission.

18. The train that my father is on _____ before noon.
✓ **C) is supposed to arrive**
Be supposed to + infinitive expresses what is expected or scheduled: according to the timetable, the train **is supposed to arrive** before noon. **Ought to** needs a main verb (**ought to arrive**), and **had better** is never followed by **to**. **Would rather have arrived** expresses a preference, which makes no sense for a train.

19. _____ I write this homework again because I've spilt water on it?
✓ **D) Need**
Need can be a modal verb in questions: **Need I …?** means 'Is it necessary for me to …?'. Here the speaker asks if spilt water makes it necessary to redo the homework. As a modal it takes the bare infinitive and no **-s**, so **Needs I** is wrong. **Must to** and **Ought to I** are incorrect forms.

20. Dave is in Oklahoma, so he _____ these flowers.
✓ **A) can't have brought**
Can't have + past participle expresses a confident negative deduction about the past: Dave is far away, so it is impossible that he brought the flowers. Not **mustn't have brought**, which is not used for negative deduction in British English. **Needn't have brought** means it was unnecessary but he did it.

21. In my first race, I _____ complete the 10-mile run.
✓ **B) wasn't able to**
Wasn't able to expresses a lack of ability on a specific past occasion, here the first race. **Can't** is present tense, so it does not fit. **Didn't have to** means it was not necessary, and **mustn't** expresses prohibition.

22. Even a dictator _____ govern by his own one-way inspiration alone; therefore, the totalitarian rulers get back the reports of the secret police.
✓ **E) cannot**
Cannot expresses impossibility: not even a dictator is able to rule using only his own ideas. **Even** and **therefore** show the logic: because it is impossible, rulers rely on secret-police reports. **Has to/must/ought to** would mean he is obliged to govern that way, which contradicts the second clause.

23. Until we have thoroughly understood this principle, we shall not know why we _____ value our liberty, or how we _____ protect and develop it.
✓ **D) ought to / can**
Ought to gives a moral reason (why we **ought to** value liberty), and **can** refers to the ability or means to protect it (how we **can** protect and develop it). In the other options at least one modal does not fit. **Could** is hypothetical, and **may have to** and **cannot** distort the meaning.

24. The totalitarian rulers think they _____ the freedom of an opposition; they simply silence their opponents.
✓ **D) don't need**
Don't need states the rulers' present belief: opposition freedom is unnecessary to them, so they silence anyone who disagrees. **Think** introduces a present belief, so the present simple fits. **Might not have needed** and **wouldn't have needed** refer to hypothetical past situations. **Ought to need** and **must need** are illogical.

25. No man _____ care profoundly that every fool _____ say what he likes.
✓ **B) can / should**
Can in **No man can care** expresses impossibility: nobody is able to care deeply. **Should** after **that** (after expressions of feeling or importance) is the formal 'putative should': **that every fool should say what he likes**. The other pairs do not create this formal pattern.

26. The rights are incidental; and though they _____ be preserved, they _____ be preserved only by regarding them as incidental, as auxiliary to the substance of liberty that _____ be cherished and cultivated.
✔ A) must / can / must
Must expresses necessity: the rights **must** be preserved, and the substance of liberty **must** be cherished. **Can … only** expresses the only possible way: they **can** be preserved **only** by regarding them as incidental. The other combinations weaken necessity (**may**, **might**) or sound archaic (**shall**).

27. You'd better _____ a rise in your salary. Your boss is very angry now; it is not the right time.
✔ E) not ask
Had better is followed by the bare infinitive, and its negative is **had better not + infinitive**: **You'd better not ask.** The pattern does not use **to**, **-ing** or **do not**, so **to ask**, **not asking** and **do not ask** are all wrong.

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