ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Modality Advanced Level MCQs Test With Answers 1

English Modal Verbs Tests · 65 questions · Online test and questions PDF:
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Explanations

1. The company had sent the advertisement to the newspaper when they realised they'd mistyped the salary they were offering for the position. Luckily, they _____ the newspaper to correct their mistake before they printed it.
✓ **B) were able to ask**
For one specific past success we use **was/were able to**, not **could**. The sentence says the company actually managed to ask the newspaper before printing (**Luckily**). Not **could have asked**: it means the action was possible but did not happen.

2. A: I wish I hadn't criticised Mark's drawings yesterday because he hasn't spoken to me today. Do you think he'll come to my party on Friday?

B: Possibly, he _____ you by then.
✓ **C) might have forgiven**
Might have + past participle with **by then** shows a possible completed action before a future time (Friday). **Possibly** tells us B is not sure. Not **must have forgiven**: that expresses certainty and normally refers to the past.

3. Since the day his manager transferred him to the foundry section of the steelworks, he _____ safety goggles.
✓ **B) has had to wear**
Since the day… needs the present perfect. The obligation began then and still continues, so we use **has had to wear**, the present perfect of **have to**. **Will be wearing**, **is wearing** and **ought to wear** do not fit with **since**.

4. A: This student has circled the mistakes in the text, but he hasn't corrected them, so he'll only get half marks.

B: He _____ the instructions properly.
✓ **E) must not have read**
B makes a logical deduction about the past from the evidence: the mistakes were circled but not corrected. Negative deduction about the past uses **must not have** or **can't have** + past participle, so **must not have read**. Not **shouldn't have read**: that would criticise him for reading them at all.

5. As a single woman, Lucy _____ quite a lot of money on clothes, jewellery and cosmetics, but now married with two children, she can't spare so much money on them.
✓ **D) would spend**
Would + infinitive describes a repeated habit in the past. Here it is what Lucy regularly did when she was single, contrasted with **now**. Not **had spent**: the past perfect does not express a past habit.

6. A: Are you going to enrol on the second course when we finish this one?

B: I don't know. It's tiring coming every day after work. I _____ a month before I start the second course.
✓ **A) may wait**
B says **I don't know**, so a modal of future possibility fits: **may wait**. Not **have to wait**: that expresses obligation, but B is only considering the idea.

7. James will book the hotel rooms for the German representatives and you _____ them at the airport at eight o'clock. Is that clear?
✓ **C) are to meet**
Be to + infinitive gives formal instructions or arrangements made by someone in authority: **you are to meet them**. The clue is **Is that clear?** Not **can meet**: that only gives permission or possibility, not an instruction.

8. _____ lending me 25 cents so that I don't have to break a hundred-dollar bill?
✓ **C) Would you mind**
Would you mind + -ing is a polite request: **Would you mind lending me…?** Not **Would you like**: it is followed by **to** + infinitive and makes an offer, not a request.

9. A: Jack doesn't work for a computer company, so why has he gone to the computer exhibition?

B: I don't know. He _____ interested in buying a computer to use at home or perhaps he's thinking of starting his own company.
✓ **E) could be**
B is unsure (**I don't know… or perhaps**), so we need a modal of possibility: **could be**. Not **must be**: that shows a confident deduction, which contradicts **perhaps** and the second possibility B gives.

10. You _____ anything to me. If you want to spend virtually your entire wages on lottery tickets, then that's up to you.
✓ **B) don't have to explain**
Don't have to means there is no obligation: the speaker is saying you don't need to justify yourself, and the decision is yours (**that's up to you**). Not **shouldn't have explained**: that criticises a past action that already happened.

11. You _____ anything after your operation. The nurses will tell you when it is all right.
✓ **D) mustn't eat**
Mustn't expresses prohibition: eating is not allowed until the nurses say it is all right. Not **needn't eat** or **don't have to eat**: they mean eating is unnecessary, not forbidden.

12. Oh dear, my fruit cake is a little too sweet. I _____ the amount of sugar I add to the mixture next time.
✓ **C) will have to reduce**
Next time refers to the future, so we need a future obligation: **will have to reduce**. Not **should have reduced**: that refers to the past and does not fit with **next time**.

13. Isn't it great that Tim and Sue have given up smoking? They both _____ too much.
✓ **A) used to smoke**
Used to + infinitive describes a past habit that has stopped. They have given up smoking, so they **used to smoke** too much. Not **have been smoking**: it suggests the habit continues up to now.

14. A: What's happened to Mr Meyer?

B: He's ill in hospital. They _____ keep him in overnight, and if they do, he _____ travel back to Germany tomorrow morning.
✓ **A) may / won't be able to**
May expresses a possibility (they are not sure yet). **Won't be able to** expresses future inability, which is the result of staying in hospital. Not **can / couldn't**: **couldn't** is past and does not match **tomorrow morning**.

15. A: _____ we paint the kitchen this weekend?

B: We could, but I _____ wait until the weather gets better because we'll have to open the window.
✓ **D) Shall / would sooner**
Shall we…? makes a suggestion. **Would sooner + bare infinitive** expresses preference, with the same meaning as **would rather**: **I would sooner wait**. Not **Can / would like**: **would like** needs **to** before the verb.

16. A: I couldn't persuade John to come to the match with us. He said he couldn't afford it.

B: You _____ to lend him the money.

A: I did, but he said he _____ borrow any money at that moment.
✓ **B) could have offered / would rather not**
Could have + past participle suggests a past option that was not taken: **You could have offered to lend him the money**. **Would rather not + bare infinitive** expresses his preference: **he would rather not borrow**. Not **must have offered**: that is a deduction, not a suggestion.

17. _____ I ask you a favour? _____ you work on Thursday night this week instead of Friday night?
✓ **C) May / Could**
May I…? politely asks permission, and **Could you…?** politely asks someone to do something. Not **Would / Will**: we don't say **Would I ask you a favour?**

18. Amy Johnson, the first woman pilot who _____ from England to Australia, _____ several times during her flight to fill her plane with petrol.
✓ **E) flew / had to stop**
Both events are completed past facts. The past simple **flew** states her achievement, and **had to stop** (past of **have to**) shows a past necessity. Not **could fly / was stopping**: **could** does not describe one specific achievement.

19. _____ you take this screwdriver back to Mr Smith next door and thank him for lending it to us?
✓ **A) Will**
Will you…? is a common way to ask someone to do something. Not **Shall you**: in questions, **shall** is used with **I/we** for offers and suggestions.

20. They _____ their house yet. They only put it up for sale yesterday.
✓ **E) can't have sold**
Can't have + past participle is a confident negative deduction about the past. They put the house up for sale only yesterday, so it is almost impossible that it is already sold. Not **needn't have sold**: that means they sold it but it was unnecessary.

21. We _____ get a visa before we _____ go to Bulgaria.
✓ **C) have to / can**
Have to expresses an external obligation (a visa rule), and **can** shows what we will then be allowed to do. Not **are to / must**: **must go** makes the trip an obligation, which is not the meaning.

22. I only had a brief chat with Mary at the bus stop, so I _____ to ask her how she _____ on in her new job.
✓ **B) forgot / was getting**
The past simple **forgot** reports what happened at the bus stop. The past continuous **was getting on** describes her ongoing situation at that time (**get on in a job** = make progress). Not **must have forgotten**: the speaker knows what happened and is not guessing.

23. A: Well, I've got lots of great ideas, but I haven't written anything down yet.

B: But you _____ us a written outline of your section of the project today!

A: Don't panic. I'll do it tomorrow.
✓ **D) were supposed to give**
Was/were supposed to describes an arrangement or duty that is not being done: the outline was due today but is not written. Not **had to give**: it states a past obligation and does not show that the plan failed.

24. Our father _____ a small present for me and my sister every month when he _____ his salary.
✓ **D) would buy / received**
Would + infinitive describes a repeated past action (**every month**): **would buy**. The time clause uses the past simple: **when he received his salary**. Not **was buying / had received**: the past continuous does not express a repeated habit.

25. I _____ listening to pop music at all, but recently I have realised that I quite like certain pop-songs.
✓ **A) didn't use to enjoy**
Didn't use to + infinitive describes a past state that has changed: the speaker did not enjoy pop music before, but now likes some songs. Not **wasn't enjoying**: the past continuous describes one moment, not a long-term past state.

26. When their baby was born, Lucy _____ up work until they found someone to look after the baby.
✓ **C) had to give**
Had to is the past of **must/have to** and expresses a past necessity: Lucy was obliged to stop working for a time. Not **used to give**: giving up work is not a repeated habit.

27. They had their baby daughter in June and, since then, they _____ in restaurants very often.
✓ **D) haven't been able to eat**
Since then needs the present perfect. Ability uses **be able to**, so **haven't been able to eat**. Not **couldn't eat** or **weren't able to eat**: past simple forms do not go with **since then**.

28. Do you think he _____ to watch the match with us? I know he enjoys football.
✓ **E) would like**
Would like + to + infinitive means 'want' and fits the structure **...to watch**. Not **would mind**: it is followed by **-ing**, not **to**. **Would sooner** and **had better** are followed by an infinitive without **to**.

29. Would you mind if I _____ the secretary for half an hour, Mr Pitt? She has two thousand leaflets to send out.
✓ **B) helped**
After **Would you mind if I...?** we normally use the past simple (**helped**) to ask permission politely. It refers to the present or future, not the past. Not **will help**: **will** is not used after **if** here.

30. A: I missed this week's episode of "The Simpsons". What happened?

B: I don't know. I don't watch it anymore.

A: Why not? I thought you were a fan of the show like me.

B: Yes, I _____ it three times a week, but now I go to German lessons every night.
✓ **A) used to watch**
Used to + infinitive describes a past habit that has stopped: B watched it regularly before but now has German lessons. Not **have watched**: the present perfect does not show a habit that has ended.

31. I believe you _____ this computer program in your previous job, so you _____ it difficult at times. Please don't hesitate to ask me for help.
✓ **A) didn't use / might find**
The past simple **didn't use** describes a fact about the previous job. **Might find** expresses a possible difficulty in the future. Not **hadn't used / can find**: there is no earlier past event, so the past perfect does not fit, and **can find** does not express possibility here.

32. Apparently, the man across the road _____ his car after all because he took down the for-sale sign a week ago and he is still driving to work.
✓ **E) is keeping**
The present continuous **is keeping** describes his current decision: he took down the for-sale sign a week ago and still drives the car, so he has decided not to sell it (**after all**). Not **used to keep**: that describes a past habit, but he still has the car now.

33. A: Hopefully, Peter booked the tickets for us yesterday.

B: He _____ them yesterday. The booking office is closed on Saturdays.

A: Oh well, I'm sure he'll order them tomorrow then.
✓ **C) couldn't have booked**
Couldn't have + past participle expresses a certain negative deduction about the past: the office was closed, so booking was impossible. Not **hasn't booked**: the present perfect cannot be used with **yesterday**.

34. A: I didn't think Paul and Sam were coming to the picnic.

B: They _____ their minds.

A: Well, it's nice to see them again.
✓ **C) must have changed**
Must have + past participle is a confident deduction about the past: they are at the picnic, so they must have changed their minds. Not **should have changed**: it expresses criticism or an unfulfilled duty.

35. I'm glad that I _____ hard to persuade my parents because they were already keen on the idea.
✓ **B) didn't need to try**
Didn't need to + infinitive means it was unnecessary, so the speaker didn't do it: the parents were already keen. Not **needn't have tried**: it means the speaker did try, without needing to, which does not fit **I'm glad**.

36. When it was completed, the Eiffel Tower _____ the tallest building in the world, but now there are many others that are taller than the Eiffel Tower.
✓ **D) was**
When it was completed points to a specific moment in the past, so we use the past simple **was**. Not **used to be**: it describes a long past state or habit and doesn't fit one point in time.

37. Cats are very alert to any movement. For this reason, they will pounce when a victim _____ but _____ prey that remains still.
✓ **E) moves / may not attack**
This is a general truth, so the present simple **moves** is used after **when**. **May not attack** shows that something is possible but not certain. Not **moved / don't attack**: the past tense does not fit a general fact.

38. When I lived in England, I _____ Indian food several times a month, but here in Istanbul, it's virtually impossible to find.
✓ **B) would eat**
Would + infinitive expresses a repeated past action (**several times a month**) when the speaker lived in England. Not **had eaten**: the past perfect does not describe a habit.

39. A: Mrs Parkinson _____ three accidents in the last month.

B: She _____ a very careful driver, then.

A: Couldn't it have been just bad luck?
✔ **C) has had / must not be**
In the last month needs the present perfect: **has had**. B's negative deduction from this evidence is **must not be** (more common in American English; British speakers often say **can't be**). Not **was having / can't be**: the past continuous does not fit **in the last month**.

40. The weather is awful again today. Let's look in the newspaper. There _____ a good film showing at the cinema.
✔ **D) might be**
Might be expresses a present possibility: there is a chance a good film is on, so they will check. Not **can be**: it expresses general or theoretical possibility, not a specific one.

41. Cellulose is indigestible by humans, but herbivores, such as cows and horses, _____ it because they retain it long enough for digestion by micro-organisms present in their digestive system.
✔ **A) can digest**
Can expresses natural ability: herbivores **can digest** cellulose, unlike humans. Not **have to digest**: the point is ability, not obligation.

42. You _____ all your holiday money on the first day. You will need some for the rest of the week.
✔ **B) mustn't spend**
Mustn't gives strong advice or prohibition: don't spend everything, because you will need money later. Not **don't spend**: **You don't spend…** is a statement, not advice.

43. Using lasers to produce extremely short and repeatable pulses of light, today scientists _____ events happening in time intervals as short as one thousand-trillionth of a second.
✔ **E) are able to measure**
Today shows ability in the present, so we use **are able to measure**. Not **must have measured** or **may have measured**: these are deductions about the past, but the sentence states a present fact.

44. Living cells exist in a variety of shapes; for example, they _____ cube-shaped or flat.
✔ **A) may be**
May be expresses possibility: cells come in different shapes, so some are cube-shaped and some are flat. Not **must be**: that would mean every cell is one of those shapes.

45. We _____ the football match on television yesterday, but we _____ because there was a power cut.
✔ **C) were going to watch / couldn't**
Was/were going to + infinitive expresses a past plan that didn't happen. **Couldn't** gives the reason it failed: the power cut made watching impossible. Not **were supposed to watch / haven't**: the present perfect does not fit **yesterday**.

46. Oh no, look at the sign! We _____ here. These spaces are for doctors and emergency patients only.
✔ **D) aren't supposed to park**
Be not supposed to means something is not allowed by a rule. Here the rule is the sign: the spaces are for doctors and emergency patients only. Not **haven't got to park**: that means parking is not necessary, not that it is forbidden.

47. You _____ your children some freedom; otherwise, they will resent you.
✔ **B) must allow**
Must expresses strong advice or necessity, with a warning of the result (**otherwise, they will resent you**). Not **allow**: **You allow your children…** is a plain statement and does not give advice.

48. It's not easy learning Turkish at home. Do you think I _____ an evening course?
✔ **C) should take**
Should + infinitive is used to ask for or give advice: **Do you think I should take…?** Not **must have taken**: it is a deduction about the past.

49. I refused to give my son any money for the "Mega Death" sweatshirt he wants to buy, but I'm sure he'll try to get some from his grandmother. I'd really rather she _____ him the money because I don't want him to wear such an awful thing.
✔ **A) didn't lend**
Would rather + another subject + past simple expresses a preference about someone else's action: **I'd rather she didn't lend him the money**. Not **not to lend** or **won't lend**: neither form follows **would rather + subject**.

50. He _____ safety goggles, but he wasn't and, as a result, the hot steel badly damaged his eyes.
✔ **E) ought to have been wearing**
Ought to have been + -ing criticises a past situation that did not happen: he should have been wearing goggles, **but he wasn't**. Not **must have been wearing**: that is a deduction that he was wearing them, which contradicts **he wasn't**.

51. I _____ my car last week if I had accepted James' offer. He offered me two thousand dollars for it, but I wanted more.
✔ **B) could have sold**
This is a third conditional: **could have + past participle** in the main clause shows a past possibility that did not happen, with **if I had accepted**. Not **was able to sell**: he did not sell the car.

52. In parts of Africa, women still _____ water a long way to their village.
✔ **D) have to carry**
Still shows a present situation, and **have to** expresses present necessity. Not **used to carry**: it describes the past and contradicts **still**.

53. Why did you bother so much trying to change your money? You _____ it, you know, as they accept US dollars in Mexico.
✔ **D) needn't have changed**
Needn't have + past participle means someone did something that was not necessary. The person did change money, but dollars are accepted in Mexico. Not **couldn't have changed**: it means it was impossible.

54. I'd rather _____ the match on television than here in the pouring rain. I'm sure we'll all catch a cold!
✓ **E) be watching**
Would rather is followed by a bare infinitive. The continuous form **be watching** describes the action happening now (**here in the pouring rain**). Not **to watch**: **would rather** is never followed by **to**.

55. You knew that we had to walk a long way today, so you really _____ those high-heeled shoes. You only have yourself to blame for your aching feet.
✓ **C) shouldn't have worn**
Shouldn't have + past participle criticises a past action: she wore the shoes, and it was a mistake. The clue is **You only have yourself to blame**. Not **can't have worn**: it is a deduction that she didn't wear them, but she did.

56. I think Victoria _____ to the party although she really wants to because she is flying to Paris the next day and has to pack her things.
✓ **A) may not come**
May not expresses a future possibility: she probably won't come because she has to pack. Not **couldn't come** or **didn't come**: these are past forms, but the party is in the future.

57. You _____ this report to the managing director personally. Do you understand?
✓ **D) are to hand**
Be to + infinitive gives formal orders or instructions: **You are to hand this report…** The clue is **Do you understand?** Not **would like to hand**: it expresses a wish, not an instruction.

58. You _____ for the cocktail party after the conference if you are worried about arriving home late.
✓ **B) don't have to stay**
Don't have to shows there is no obligation: you can leave if you are worried about the time. Not **needn't have stayed**: it refers to the past, but the party is in the future.

59. He _____ handball quite often, but his new job requires him to travel a lot now, so he doesn't have time anymore.
✓ **E) used to play**
Used to + infinitive describes a past habit that has stopped: he played often, but he doesn't have time **anymore**. Not **must have played**: it is a deduction, not a statement of a past habit.

60. Would you mind _____ your cigarette smoke in my face? It's getting on my nerves.
✓ **C) not blowing**
Would you mind + (not) + -ing is a polite request: **Would you mind not blowing…?** Not **not to blow**: **mind** is followed by the **-ing** form, not **to** + infinitive.

61. You _____ your jacket on a clothes hanger and not leave it on the chair. You'll crease it!
✓ **D) ought to hang**
Ought to + infinitive gives advice about the right thing to do: hang the jacket, because **you'll crease it** otherwise. Not **may hang**: it only gives permission, not advice.

62. It's a long journey and there may not be any restaurants on the way. You _____ something before you leave.
✓ **C) had better eat**
Had better + bare infinitive gives strong advice about a specific situation, often with a risk (there may be no restaurants on the way). Not **must have eaten**: it is a deduction about the past.

63. I knew that Marcus didn't have much money, but he has just bought a new car. He _____ the money from someone.
✓ **B) must have borrowed**
Must have + past participle is a confident deduction about the past: he had little money but bought a car, so he **must have borrowed** it. Not **could borrow**: it shows ability or possibility, not a conclusion.

64. _____ I get some plates while you are cutting the cake?
✓ **C) Shall**
Shall I…? is used to offer help. Not **Would I…?**: it is not used for offers.

65. We _____ anything tonight. We _____ the leftovers from yesterday's dinner party.
✓ **E) needn't cook / can eat**
Needn't + bare infinitive means it is not necessary (cooking tonight). **Can** shows a possible alternative: **we can eat the leftovers**. Not **might not cook / would eat**: **would eat** needs a condition and doesn't make a suggestion here.

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