ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Modals Advanced Level Test – Quiz (Online Exercise With Answers) 1

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Explanations

1. It _____ our dog which barked continuously all night since it was sleeping inside with us.
✓ **A) can't have been**
Can't have + past participle expresses a logical certainty that something did not happen in the past. The clue is **since it was sleeping inside with us**: we know the dog was with us, so it is impossible that it was the one barking outside. Not **may not have been**, which only suggests a possibility and is too weak for a conclusion based on firm evidence.

2. You _____ not come early. I mean you _____ start to work at 10 o'clock.
✓ **C) need / may**
Need not (**needn't**) means there is no obligation: **You need not come early. May** gives permission: **you may start work at 10 o'clock**. **I mean** shows that the second sentence explains the first: you are allowed to start later. Not **need / mustn't**, because **mustn't start at 10** would forbid starting at 10, which contradicts the first sentence.

3. Why are you wasting time? You _____ your work already.
✓ **D) should have finished**
Should have + past participle criticises a past action that did not happen: the work ought to be finished by now, but it isn't. **Already** and the complaint **Why are you wasting time?** show that the speaker expected the task to be complete. Not **must be finishing**, which is a deduction about an action in progress, not a criticism.

4. Well, if your pocket's empty, you _____ all your money.
✓ **A) must have spent**
Must have + past participle is a confident deduction about the past based on present evidence. The evidence is the empty pocket, so the logical conclusion is **you must have spent all your money**. Not **should have spent**, which would mean spending all the money was the right thing to do.

5. Sue _____ in Istanbul, but her husband has just been appointed there, so she doesn't have much choice.
✓ **B) would rather not live**
Would rather (not) + bare infinitive expresses a preference. Sue does not want to live in Istanbul, but **she doesn't have much choice** because of her husband's job. Not **had better not live**, which is advice or a warning, not a personal preference.

6. He _____ be at home. His car is not in the garage.
✓ **B) can't**
Can't + infinitive is a negative deduction about the present: we are sure something is not true. The car is not in the garage, so he **can't be** at home. Not **mustn't**, which in standard British English means prohibition (**You mustn't smoke here**), not logical impossibility.

7. Humans _____ smell about 10,000 scents, ranging from freshly cut flowers to the aversive smell of an angry skunk.
✓ **E) can**
Can expresses a general ability or capacity. The sentence is a scientific fact about what the human nose is able to do. **Must**, **should** and **ought to** express obligation or deduction, which do not fit a statement of natural ability.

8. I'm sorry I'm late. You _____ waiting for a long time.
✓ **D) must have been**
Must have been + -ing is a confident deduction about an activity continuing up to a point in the past. The speaker is late, so they conclude the other person **must have been waiting** a long time. Not **might have been**, which is too uncertain; the speaker is apologising because they are sure of the long wait.

9. It's strange that he hasn't said any more about his plans to emigrate. He _____ his mind about it.
✓ **D) might have changed**
Might have + past participle expresses a possibility about the past. The speaker finds the silence **strange** and offers a possible explanation without being certain: he **might have changed** his mind. Not **should have changed**, which would mean changing his mind was the right thing to do.

10. You _____ a doctor as soon as you _____ this irritating headache.
✓ **A) should have visited / felt**
Should have + past participle criticises a past action that did not happen: you didn't see a doctor, and that was a mistake. In the time clause after **as soon as**, the past simple **felt** refers to the past. Not **could visit / will feel**: future **will** is not used after time conjunctions such as **as soon as**, and **ought to have visited / would feel** is wrong for the same reason.

11. We _____ flying to Spain now if we had bought tickets in time.
✓ B) would be
This is a mixed conditional: a past condition (**if we had bought tickets in time**) with a present result (**now**). The present result uses **would + infinitive**, here the continuous **would be flying**. Not **should have been**, which refers to the past and expresses criticism, so it does not match **now**.

12. My aunt _____ here tomorrow. She is abroad until next week.
✓ A) can't come
Can't + infinitive expresses impossibility. The aunt is abroad until next week, so it is impossible for her to come **tomorrow**. Not **won't have to come**, which means it will not be necessary, not that it is impossible.

13. You _____ not open the door on any account when I'm out.
✓ E) must
Must not expresses a strong prohibition. **On any account** (= under no circumstances) shows that the speaker is giving a firm order. Not **need not**, which only means it is not necessary and does not fit the emphatic **on any account**.

14. I _____ a bit longer for you at the station that day. I am so sorry!
✓ D) should have waited
Should have + past participle expresses regret about a past action: the speaker didn't wait long enough and now regrets it. The clues are **that day** (past) and **I am so sorry!** Not **must have waited**, which is a deduction, not regret.

15. You _____ find some of the most colourful people on the bus.
✓ E) may
May expresses possibility: it is possible that you will meet some very colourful (interesting, unusual) people on the bus. **Must** and **have to** express obligation, and **had better** gives advice or a warning. **Would rather** expresses the speaker's own preference, so it does not fit a sentence about 'you'. None of these four makes sense here.

16. Jimmy is upstairs. He _____ his homework.
✓ A) must be doing
Must be + -ing is a confident deduction about an action happening now. Jimmy is upstairs, so the speaker concludes he **must be doing** his homework at this moment. Not **must have done**, which refers to a completed past action, not something in progress now.

17. She said it _____ be Tom because he was in the army at that time.
✓ E) couldn't
Couldn't expresses impossibility, here in reported speech (backshift of **can't**): She said, "It **can't be** Tom." The reason, **he was in the army**, makes it impossible. Not **mustn't**, which expresses prohibition, not logical impossibility.

18. We _____ for the bus for over an hour in heavy rain before it arrived. We have both caught a cold.
✓ C) shouldn't have waited
Shouldn't have + past participle expresses regret about something that did happen in the past. We waited in the rain and **have both caught a cold**, so waiting was a mistake. Not **couldn't have waited**, which would mean the waiting was impossible, but we did wait.

19. I know I _____ the letter earlier today when I was in town, but I forgot to.
✓ E) could have posted
Could have + past participle describes a past opportunity that was not used. The speaker was in town and had the chance to post the letter, **but forgot to**. Not **must have posted**, which is a deduction that the letter was posted; the sentence says it wasn't.

20. Mother: You _____ wash your hands when you come in.

Small Boy: OK! I _____ wash my hands when I come in.
✓ E) must / have to
Must expresses an obligation that comes from the speaker: the mother sets the rule. When the boy repeats the rule, the obligation comes from someone else, so he uses **have to**. Not **should / need**, because **need** as a modal is not used in positive statements (**I need wash** is wrong).

21. My diary isn't in its regular place; someone _____ it.
✓ A) must have taken
Must have + past participle is a confident deduction about the past. The diary is not in its usual place, so the logical conclusion is that someone **must have taken** it. Not **should have taken**, which would mean taking it was the right thing to do.

22. Just before the guests came in, I ran out of sugar and I _____ some from my neighbour.
✓ B) had to borrow
Had to is the past form of **have to/must** and expresses a past necessity: there was no sugar, so borrowing some was necessary. Not **could borrow**: **could** is not used for a single successful action in the past (we say **was able to**), and it does not express necessity.

23. You _____ any more pills; you look as if you have recovered.
✓ D) needn't take
Needn't + infinitive means there is no necessity now or in the future. The person seems to have recovered, so taking more pills is not necessary. Not **shouldn't have taken**, which criticises a past action, while the sentence is about the pills still to come.

24. If we have no money to take a taxi, we _____ on the bus.
✓ E) will have to get
This is a first conditional (**if** + present simple, **will** + infinitive). **Will have to** expresses a future necessity: without taxi money, getting the bus will be necessary. Not **should have got**, which refers to the past and does not fit a real future condition.

25. Oh no! Fred's wallet is lying on the coffee table. He _____ it here last night.

✓ E) must have left

Must have + past participle is a confident deduction about the past based on present evidence. Fred's wallet is on the table, so he **must have left** it there last night. Not **should have left**, which would mean leaving it was the right thing to do.

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