ANSWER KEY WITH EXPLANATIONS

Modals and Auxiliary Verbs Test 1

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1	**C**	2	**D**	3	**D**	4	**C**	5	**D**	6	**C**	7	**B**	8	**E**	9	**C**	10	**B**
11	**A**	12	**A**	13	**E**	14	**A**	15	**D**	16	**E**	17	**C**	18	**B**	19	**E**	20	**A**

Explanations

1. I _____ travel by coach to New York last week because the airline pilots were on strike.
✔ **C) had to**
Had to is the past of **have to**. It shows something was necessary, and **last week** tells us we need the past. Not **need to** or **ought to**, because they are present forms and don't fit a finished past event.

2. You _____ your doctor before you started dieting.
✔ **D) should have consulted**
Should have + past participle criticises a past action that didn't happen: **You should have consulted your doctor.** The clue is **before you started**, which is in the past. Not **have to consult**, because it talks about a present obligation.

3. My dictionary isn't in its usual place; someone _____ it.
✔ **D) must have borrowed**
Must have + past participle is a confident guess about the past. The dictionary is missing, so the speaker is almost sure someone **must have borrowed** it. Not **might borrow**, because it is about the future, not something that already happened.

4. It is so hot and dry here; I wish I _____ on holiday soon.
✔ **C) could go**
To talk about a wish for the present or future, use **wish** + **could** + verb: **I wish I could go on holiday soon.** Not **could have gone**, because that is a regret about the past, and **soon** points to the future.

5. Of all the paintings in the exhibition here, that one _____ most attention so far.
✔ **D) has received**
So far means 'from the start until now'. It is a clue for the present perfect: **has received**. Not **receives**, because the present simple doesn't connect the past with now.

6. He just _____ help doing the things that he does. He _____ get some medical help.
✔ **C) can't / should**
Can't help + -ing means you are unable to stop yourself doing something. **Should** gives advice: **He should get some medical help.** The other pairs don't fit, e.g. **can help** doesn't explain why he needs help.

7. You _____ have come to see me today. I am feeling much better and _____ get around by myself now.
✔ **B) needn't / am able to**
Needn't have + past participle means someone did something that wasn't necessary. The person came, but the speaker is already better. **Am able to** means 'can': **I am able to get around by myself now.**

8. He _____ to get into the house even though he didn't have a key.
✔ **E) was able**
Was able to is used for a past success in a particular situation, and only this option fits before **to get**. He managed to get in without a key. Not **couldn't**, because it is never followed by **to**.

9. Jane _____ passed the exam if she had studied a little harder.
✔ **C) could have**
This is a third conditional about an unreal past: **if** + past perfect, then **could/would have** + past participle. **Jane could have passed the exam if she had studied harder.** Not **could** alone, because **passed** needs **have** before it.

10. My mother told me that I _____ swim at the age of 4 but that I later became afraid of the water.
✔ **B) could**
Could is the past of **can** and talks about a general ability in the past: **I could swim at the age of 4.** It also fits reported speech after **told me**. Not **can**, because the story is in the past.

11. _____ you give me a hand with this report? I'll never finish it if you don't.
✔ **A) can**
Can you …? is a common way to ask someone for help: **Can you give me a hand?** Not **may**, because **may** asks for permission (**May I …?**), not for a favour.

12. I _____ go with John than with Tim. Tim is never on time.
✔ **A) would rather**
Would rather + base verb + **than** shows what you prefer: **I would rather go with John than with Tim.** Not **rather** alone, because it needs **would** (or **'d**) before it.

13. I _____ sit at home this evening than go out to dinner with the Joneses.
✔ **E) would rather**
Would rather + base verb + **than** + base verb compares two choices: **I would rather sit at home than go out.** Not **had better**, because it gives advice and is not used with **than**.

14. _____ you see who's at the door? It _____ be Jane. She had said that she _____ drop by today if she had time.
✔ **A) would / may / might**
Would you …? is a polite request. **May** shows a present possibility (**It may be Jane**). **Might** is the reported form of **may** after **She had said that …**. Not **could / will / had**, because **had drop by** is not correct English.

15. _____ I see you in my office in the next hour?
✔ **D) may**
May I …? is a polite way to ask for permission: **May I see you in my office?** Not **would**, because we don't say **Would I see you…?** to ask permission.

16. I saw Diana downtown yesterday. She _____ going to the new shop that opened on Main Street. She had mentioned that she _____ visit the new shop when she got a chance to.
✔ **E) could have been / would**
Could have been + -ing is a guess about what someone was doing at a past moment: **She could have been going to the new shop**. **Would** is the past form of **will** in reported speech: she said "I will visit it" → she had mentioned that she **would** visit it. Not **was / hadn't to**, because **hadn't to visit** is not correct English.

17. -- "_____ we visit the Jones family tomorrow evening?"

-- "I _____ prefer to stay home."
✔ **C) shall / would**
Shall we …? makes a suggestion. **Would prefer** is a polite way to say what you want: **I would prefer to stay home.** Not **should / ought to**, because **ought to prefer** is not natural English.

18. I _____ be home tonight, but I _____ be home tomorrow.
✔ **B) won't / might**
But shows a contrast. Tonight is certain (**won't be**), and tomorrow is only possible (**might be**). Not **will / will**, because there is no contrast for **but** to show.

19. It is awfully late; I _____ start home now.
✔ **E) had better**
Had better + base verb gives strong advice about what is sensible now: **I had better start home now.** The clue is **awfully late**. Not **would**, because it doesn't express what is the right thing to do.

20. "Who is that?"
"I'm not sure, but it _____ be the new mailman."
✔ **A) may**
May expresses a possibility when we are not certain: **I'm not sure, but it may be the new mailman.** Not **will**, because it sounds certain, and the speaker says **I'm not sure**.

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