

Grammar Practice: Speculations in Present and Past

► CERTAINTY AND POSSIBILITY

In the present

must (not)

might (not) / may (not) / could

can't

+ base form

+ *be* + -ing

In the past

must (not)

may (not) / might (not) / could

can't / couldn't

+ *have* + past participle

Task 1: Complete the following sentences in the present.

1. This drawing has eight legs. Insects have six legs. So it _____ an insect.
2. "What are the straight lines?" // "I'm not sure. They _____ trails or roads.
3. "What's the plane doing?" // "It _____ photographing the lines, but I can't see a camera."
4. It's summer in Europe now, so it _____ winter in Peru.
5. I'd like to walk along the lines, but they _____ let people do that.
6. The figures are so big that a plane _____ the only way to see them properly.

Task 2: Complete these sentences about the Nasca lines with the past form. MODAL + have + past participle

1. The lines _____ something very special to the Nazca people. (**must / mean**)
2. We know water _____ easy to find. (**can't / be**)
3. The water in the area _____. (**might / disappear**)
4. People _____ the drawings for fun. (**might / make**)
5. The animal drawings _____ roads. (**couldn't / be**)
6. The animals _____ in the region. (**must / live**)

Task 3: Complete conversations by marking the correction option in bold then use the verb in parentheses. You have to choose between a present or past modal form.

1. A: Why hasn't my sister returned my phone?
B: Well, she **can't / may** _____ (forget). She never forgets things.
2. A: Is Sandra here? I haven't seen her today.
B: Yes, she's here. She **can't / might** _____ (get) coffee.
3. A: Who's Tom talking to?
B: It **may / must** _____ (be) his father. He said, "Hi, Dad."
4. A: Why did the plane arrive late?
B: I don't know. It **could / might not** _____ (take off) late.
5. A: Is Joe around? We have a meeting.
B: Well, his computer is still on, so he **can't / must** _____ (go out).

6. A: Why is Phil wearing two different socks?

B: He *can't / might* _____ (*get dressed*) in a hurry this morning.