

## Speculation & Deduction in the Present

When we are guessing if something is true or speculating about a situation in the present, we can use the following modal verbs:

🔊 **might, could, may, should, shouldn't, must or can't** + *infinitive*

These verbs express different degrees of certainty, **must** and **can't** are used for when we feel very sure about something, and **might, could** and **may** are used to express possibility, when we feel less certain.

For example, here are some possible responses to a situation where someone is late for a meeting:

*There **must be** a traffic jam, he's never late.*  
*He **can't be** in a traffic jam; he always takes the train.*  
*We **might have to** postpone the meeting until later this afternoon.*  
*He **could be** held up in another meeting.*  
*It **may be** difficult to arrange another time.*

🔊 **Should & Shouldn't**

**Should** and **shouldn't** can be used to express what we assume is true, what we expect to happen:

*He just called. He **should arrive** any minute now*  
*It **shouldn't be** difficult to organise another meeting.*

🔊 **Degrees of certainty – Adverbs & Adjectives**

The adverbs **maybe** and **perhaps** normally go at the beginning of a clause:

***Maybe** the train is delayed*  
***Perhaps** he has forgotten*

Other adverbs are used after the verb **to be** and before all other present simple verbs:

He is **definitely** coming  
We **probably** have to reschedule this meeting.  
It's **certainly not** a problem to arrange another time.

Adjectives can be used with the verb **to be** to express possibility or certainty: **certain, uncertain, sure, possible, likely, unlikely, doubtful**

Form: *be + adjective + that*

I'm **certain/sure** that she's on her way  
It's **possible** that she isn't coming  
It's **likely/unlikely** that we can reschedule this meeting today.

Adverbs of degree such as **very, not very, really, quite, highly** and **extremely** can be used to express different levels of certainty:

He is **highly likely** to cancel now.  
It's **quite possible** we don't need him to be here anyway.  
It's **not very certain** he can make it.