

Table of Contents

Quick and Handy Grammar Review: Past Tense Modals	2
Exercise 1: <i>Did you do it or didn't you?</i>	4
Exercise 2: <i>Choose the correct answer.</i>	5
Exercise 3: <i>Choose the correct answer.</i>	6
Exercise 4: <i>Choose the correct answer.</i>	7
Exercise 5: <i>Choose the correct answer.</i>	8
Exercise 6: <i>Choose the correct answer.</i>	9
Exercise 7: <i>Fill in the blanks using each term once.</i>	10
Exercise 8: <i>Fill in the blanks using each term once.</i>	10
Answer Key	11

Quick and Handy Grammar Review: Past Tense Modals

The modal form takes on special significance in the past tense. The categories of necessity, ability, possibility/probability/certainty, repeated action, and advisability all use auxiliaries to express their meaning. Permission is not used in the past because there are no past tense requests.

1. Necessity in the past (*had to* + base verb)

The differences in meaning among the various modals of necessity in the present tense (*must, have to, have got to, had better, should, really*) disappear in the past. Only one form is used: **had to**. The reason for this is that it is certain that you performed the activity (whether you wanted to or not). When you say, “I had to clean the basement,” you certainly did it. Notice the use of the **base verb** following *had to*.

Jon **had to** cook dinner for the family.
Yasmine **had to** watch her baby brother last evening.
Mahmoud **had to** take his car to the mechanic.
Barbara **had to** buy a pair of hiking boots for the hike.

2. Ability in the past (*could / was able to* + base verb)

We use modals of past tense ability on two occasions:

- to indicate the age or time when we had the ability to do something (*I **could** swim when I was six.*)
- to talk about a skill that we had in the past that perhaps we no longer have (*When I was 16, I **could** run six miles without stopping, but now I can't run more than two.*)

Was able to is also synonymous with *succeeded in*, and is used for specific occasions (*I **was able to** get a good discount on the coffee machine because my sister-in-law works at the Beanery on Main Street.*). We use the **base verb** following *could* and *was able to*.

When Eun Hye was nine, she **could** paint beautiful pictures.
Victor **could** read when he was four.
Gertrude **was able to** get two tickets for the concert.
Carla **was able to** get a job at the new store on Main Street.

3. Repeated action in the past (*used to / would* + base verb)

Used to and **would** (followed by the **base verb**), have the same meaning: an action that was repeated at a time in the past, but is no longer performed. In a narration, the speaker usually alternates between *used to* and *would*.

*When I was eight, I **used to** ride my bike home from school with my friends. We **would** ride three miles in about twenty minutes. I **used to** stop at my friend Jake's house on the way. His mother **would** bake cookies or cakes every afternoon, so I **used to** have a snack with them before I continued on my way home. Those cookies **would** taste so good!*

4. Advisability in the past (*should have* + past participle)

Although advice given after the fact is not particularly useful, it surely makes the advisor feel smart. If you had a choice between a fast food restaurant and a diner, and you chose the fast food place but then you got sick, your friend can confidently advise you, “You **should have** eaten in the diner.” All you can do is nod your head. You know that your friend is right. However, this knowledge does not change the situation. Note that *should have* is followed by the **past participle**, not the base verb.

Liza **should have** taken Spanish instead of German.
 Aboud **should have** gone to Montreal on vacation.
 Tian **shouldn't have** gone to the Meadowland's Diner.
 George **should have** finished his paper yesterday.

5. Possibility / probability / certainty in the past

(*may have / could have / might have* + past participle for possibility / probability)

(*must have* + past participle for certainty)

When something has happened and we are not sure of the reason or the result, we can use past tense modals (followed by the **past participle**) to express possibility or probability. The function is similar to the use in the present tense. For example, in response to the question, "Where did Jack go?" we can answer:

"He **may have** gone to the library."
 or "He **could have** gone to the cafeteria."
 or "He **might have** gone to the bathroom."

However, if one of the students saw Jack take his bag and his coat and heard him complain of a bad headache, he could say:

"He was sick. He **must have** gone home."

Summary Chart:

Ability	Possibility	Necessity	Advisability
Was able to +base verb	<i>may have</i> + past participle	<i>Had to</i> +base verb	<i>should have</i> + past participle
Could +base verb	<i>might have</i> + past participle		<i>ought to have</i> + past participle (extremely rare)
	<i>could have</i> + past participle		
I was able to ride a bike when I was eight. I could cook when I was nine.	Bo may have gone home. He might have gone to the library. He could have gone to the cafeteria.	Maria had to pick up her brother at the mall. Nestor had to write an essay for his psychology class.	Dima should have bought the coat on sale. Bob should have called his mom on her birthday.

Permission	Probability	Repeated action	Impossibility
Not used in the past	<i>Must have</i> + past participle	<i>Used to</i> +base verb	<i>Couldn't have</i> + past participle
		<i>Would</i> +base verb	
	Hank must have gone home. He's not here now.	Greta used to live in Prague. She would ride her bike every day when she was a child.	That couldn't have been Gio on the street. He is in Italy now.

Exercise 1:*Did you do it or didn't you?*

- | | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|----------|
| 1. should have | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |
| 2. could have | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |
| 3. had to | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |
| 4. may have | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |
| 5. used to | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |
| 6. could | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |
| 7. would | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |
| 8. couldn't have | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |
| 9. could have | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |
| 10. shouldn't have | a. did it | b. didn't do it | c. maybe |

Exercise 2:

Choose the correct answer.

1. I went to an Italian restaurant. It was good, but I _____ to an Indian place.
a. should gone b. would rather go c. would rather have gone d. could go

2. Thomas can't believe it. He broke both hands when he slipped on the ice. His boxing career is over. Now he walks around saying, "_____."
a. I could have been a contender! b. I could be a contender c. I might be a contender d. I should have fallen down

3. Min's friend Toshiko was in the hospital. He didn't know, so he didn't visit her. Toshiko was very sad. Now Min says, "_____."
a. I should visit her b. I should have visited her c. I could visit her d. Why I didn't visit her?

4. Yumi is a great swimmer. In fact, she _____ when she was only four years old.
a. could to swim b. can swim c. swum d. could swim

5. Josie couldn't go to the game because she _____.
a. must study b. must have studied c. had to study d. had to studying

6. Who was that guy at the party last night? I don't know. It _____ Pepita's new boyfriend.
a. couldn't have been b. might have been c. maybe d. might be

7. When Priscilla was 11 years old, she _____ in Brazil.
a. used to living b. used to live c. living d. used live

8. Yes, the chicken was decent, but Rosa _____ pizza last night.
a. should eaten b. would rather eat c. would rather have eaten d. should eat

9. I had such a good time when I lived in Miami. We _____ to the beach every day.
a. would go b. would have gone c. used to go d. should have gone

10. Everyone on the team is smiling and laughing. They _____ the game.
a. must won b. must have won c. must have lost d. used to lose

Exercise 3:

Choose the correct answer.

1. Paula _____ for that furniture store, but she doesn't anymore.
a. used to working b. used to work c. working d. used work

2. I can't believe you didn't get home until 6:00 a.m. Mom was so worried. You _____.
a. should call b. should have call c. shouldn't have called d. should have called

3. A: Isn't that Gloria's jacket? B: Yes, it is. She _____ it here when she ran out of class.
a. must leave b. must have left c. had to leave d. used to leave

4. When we visited my aunt's house when I was a kid, she _____ chocolate chip cookies for us.
a. would bake b. would have baked c. used bake d. should have baked

5. I can't believe you called Hye Eun about the party! Didn't you know that it was a surprise? You _____ her.
a. should not called b. should not have call c. shouldn't have called d. should never called

6. A: Who left that book on the desk? B: I don't know. It _____ Pavel.
a. could be b. should have been c. might being d. might have been

7. When I was 15, I _____ ten miles without stopping. Now I can't even run one mile.
a. should run b. had run c. could run d. was able run

8. A: I got a ticket for driving 96 in a 55 zone. B: You _____ so fast.
a. should drive b. should not have driving c. shouldn't have driven d. couldn't drive

9. I heard that Elsa got an A in history, but she _____ an A. She failed three different tests!
a. should get b. couldn't have gotten c. couldn't get d. had to get

10. I couldn't stay up late last night because I _____ up at 5:00 this morning.
a. must wake b. had to wake c. must waking d. was able to wake

Exercise 4:

Choose the correct answer.

1. Marta _____ here one hour ago. I don't know why she's late.
a. supposed to be b. was supposta be c. should be d. was supposed to be

2. The lecture _____ this morning, but I guess they canceled it.
a. was supposed to be b. was supposta be c. should be d. could have been

3. A: Was that elderly woman Hank's grandmother? B: It _____. Hank's grandmother died last month.
a. was supposed to be b. could be c. could have been d. couldn't have been

4. Was the couch comfortable last night? It was alright, but I _____ on the bed.
a. should sleep b. would rather sleep c. would rather have slept d. could sleep

5. When I worked in the Cuban restaurant, I _____ a "Sandwich Cubano" every day.
a. should eat b. would eat c. would have eaten d. may have eaten

6. A: Where is the rest of the pizza? B: I don't know. Carlos _____ it.
a. should have eaten b. would eat c. would have eaten d. could have eaten

7. Christopher's ex-wife used to always say, "I _____ you."
a. should never have married b. should have married c. would have married d. could have married

8. Too bad that Maria quit the company. If she had stayed, she _____ a manager now.
a. should be b. would not be c. would not have been d. might have been

9. When I lived in China, I _____ jasmine tea every day.
a. would drink b. can't drink c. should not drink d. may have drunk

10. Katie's husband _____ get back from London until Friday, but he arrived this morning.
a. was not supposed to b. should have c. should be d. could

Exercise 5:

Choose the correct answer.

1. Victoria couldn't go to the movies last night because she _____ watch her little sister.
a. must to b. must have c. had to d. have to

2. A: I drove from Washington to New York in two hours. B: You _____. It is more than 200 miles.
a. could have b. couldn't have c. shouldn't have d. had to

3. I am so hungry now. I _____ breakfast before we left.
a. should have eaten b. should eat c. would have eaten d. may have eaten

4. Bob has a tremendous stomachache now. He _____ four hamburgers and two hot dogs.
a. should have eaten b. should not eat c. shouldn't have eaten d. may have eaten

5. When I took a 7:00 p.m. class, I _____ get home at 11:00 p.m.
a. used to b. would not c. would not have gotten d. could have gotten

6. Too bad that Mary chose to work for that terrible company. Her grades were so high that she _____ a job anywhere.
a. could find b. could not find c. would not have found d. could have found

7. Gino was late for the party because he left his house at 6:00. He _____ a lot earlier than that.
a. should have left b. should not have left c. couldn't have left d. may have left

8. Real Madrid lost the game to Barcelona. With all their great players, Real Madrid _____ the game.
a. should have won b. should not have won c. couldn't have won d. may have won

9. Mozart was such a protégé that he _____ the piano when he was two years old.
a. couldn't play b. had to play c. must have played d. could play

10. Giselle _____ math than psychology last semester, but all the sections were closed.
a. would take b. would rather have take c. couldn't have taken d. would rather have taken

Exercise 6:

Choose the correct answer.

1. Vicky couldn't go out last night because she _____ finish her history essay.
a. must to b. must have c. had to d. have to

2. A: I ran two miles in six minutes. B: You _____. It is impossible to run that fast.
a. could have b. couldn't have c. shouldn't have d. had to

3. I am so tired now. I _____ a nap before we left.
a. should have taken b. should take c. would have taken d. may have taken

4. Ken is really sick now. He _____ so much at the buffet.
a. should have eaten b. should not eat c. shouldn't have eaten d. may have eaten

5. When I lived in Philadelphia, I _____ ride my bike to college.
a. used to b. would to c. would not have d. could have

6. Too bad that Hank chose to live in the east side of town. With the money he makes, he _____ a better apartment anywhere else.
a. could find b. could not find c. would not have found d. could have found

7. Gino was late for class because he left his house at 4:00. He _____ earlier.
a. should have left b. should not have left c. couldn't have left d. may have left

8. Texas lost the World Series to St. Louis. With such a great team, Texas _____.
a. should have won b. should not have won c. couldn't have won d. may have won

9. Hilary Hahn is such a great violinist that she _____ long pieces when she was only eight.
a. couldn't play b. had to play c. must have played d. could play

10. When she lived in Brazil, Giselle _____ to college.
a. would walked b. would walk c. couldn't have walk d. used walk

Exercise 7:

Fill in the blanks using each term once.

had to	should have	was able to	would
might have	used	shouldn't have	couldn't be

1. Last night, I couldn't go out because I _____ clean my house.
2. When she lived in Seoul, Hee Eun _____ ride her bike everywhere.
3. When Gina was 12, she _____ to live on the 37th floor of the building.
4. Because my brother-in-law works for Amazon, I _____ get a discount on the TV.
5. Maria _____ gone home. I don't know where she is.
6. Adam _____ drunk so much yesterday. He has a bad headache today.
7. That _____ Mariam's father. He died last month.
8. You _____ called me yesterday. I would have gone with you.

Exercise 8:

Fill in the blanks using the terms in the box. (One term will be used twice.)

should have	was able to	would	
might have	used	shouldn't have	couldn't be

1. You _____ eaten so much at the party. That's why you are sick now.
2. When Sam lived in Syria, he _____ to work in a bank.
3. James _____ walk to work when he lived in Washington.
4. I am so happy. I _____ get an appointment with Dr. Neuwenhuis.
5. Marta _____ taken the key. I don't see it anywhere.
6. Adele _____ continued working at Carl's restaurant. She used to make a lot of money.
7. Bob _____ left the party so early. Everyone started to dance after he left.
8. That _____ Xavier's wife. She now lives in Peru.