

Prepare for {IELTS}

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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

**Deductions and
assumptions**

USING **MUST** FOR
DEDUCTION

EXPLANATION

- **DEDUCTION** is the process of reaching a conclusion or answer based on your thinking about the known facts.
- We use **DEDUCTION** when we have evidence or a good reason to believe that something is/isn't happening now, or happened or did not happen in the past.
- **DEDUCTION** is quite similar to **POSSIBILITY**.
- Candidates often need to use **DEDUCTION** in their IELTS Writing and Speaking Tests.
- **DEDUCTION** is often used in the IELTS Reading and Listening Tests.
- We can often use **must** to express **DEDUCTION**.

DEDUCTION USING MUST

We can use **must** for deductions about things which are generally true or true for the period of time which we are in:

- Being brought up by a single parent **must be** difficult.
- You **must be** happy! I know how long you've been trying to get promoted. Finally, your boss has seen sense!
- I bet that living so close to where you work is great. It **must save** you loads of money not having to get the train every morning.
- I'm so sorry you've broken your nose. It **must** really **hurt**!
- She **must live** round here. I keep seeing her at the bus-stop.

DEDUCTION USING MUST

We can use **must + -ing** for deductions about this moment or the short period we are in at the moment:

- She **must be living** round here or **working** in this area over the summer. I keep seeing her when I'm driving to the office or back home.
- You **must be wondering** why it has taken me so long to reply to your letter.
- I haven't seen Jimmy for a week. He **must be working** on his dissertation.
- She has asked me to check over her CV. She **must be thinking** about applying for a new job.

DEDUCTION USING **MUST**

We can use **must + have + past participle** to describe deductions about the past:

- The plane **must have landed** late because Margaret has only just texted me.
- You **must have been** terrified when the pilot announced that the plane needed to make an emergency landing.
- Having a full-time job and doing your university course at the same time **must have been** difficult. I don't know how you managed.
- I think he **must have got** lost. He should have been here an hour ago.
- You **must have been** furious when you found out you were going to lose your job.

DEDUCTION USING **MUST**

We can use **must + have + past participle** to describe deductions about the past:

- We **must have** just **missed** each other! I got to the party at around ten o'clock. It's a pity you left so early!
- In the past, children **must have been** happier than they are today. Life was simpler and there was far less pressure to conform and to behave in a certain way.
- It **must have been** amazing to ski down that mountain. It's something I've always wanted to do.
- It **must have taken** them decades to build such an amazing temple.

DEDUCTION USING MUST

We can use **must + have been + -ing** for deductions about actions in the past which were not finished or which continued for a longer time:

- You **must have been painting** the house day and night throughout the summer. I can't believe you've finally finished.
- I **must have been sleeping** in a funny position last night. When I woke up, my neck really hurt.
- I'm so glad your test results are negative. You **must have been worrying** about them all week.
- You **must have been living** in Tokyo while I was there. I arrived in August and stayed till the following May.

DEDUCTION USING MUST

Especially in American English, and especially with **to be**, we can use **have to** for deduction:

- There **has to be** a solution to the environmental crisis. If experts are given the necessary time and resources, they will surely find one.
- It **has to be** tiring to fly a commercial airliner. You have so much responsibility on your shoulders. I admire you! I couldn't do it.

We can use **had to** for deductions about the past:

- It **had to be** hard bringing up children and working full-time. She did an amazing job.
- It **had to hurt** when you banged your head on that low ceiling.



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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

Deductions and assumptions

USING MIGHT, MAY, CAN AND COULD FOR DEDUCTION

EXPLANATION

- **DEDUCTION** is the process of reaching a conclusion or answer based on your thinking about the known facts.
- Candidates often need to use **DEDUCTION** in their Writing and Speaking Tests.
- **DEDUCTION** is often used in the IELTS Reading and Listening Tests.
- We can often use **might, may, can** and **could** to express **DEDUCTION**.

DEDUCTION

OTHER MODAL VERBS

We can use **might/may** to refer to deductions which are possibly true generally or now. We often use this structure with **to be**:

- I don't know where the dog is. He **might/may be** in the garden or in the kitchen looking for something to eat. It wouldn't be the first time. (= There is a good reason to believe that this is possible)
- I know she seems bad-tempered today but she **might/may just be** tired. She has had a lot on her plate recently.
- He left work an hour ago so he **might/may be** at home already.
- He **might/may start** work early today. He often does on a Friday.
- She **might/may decide** not to apply to go to university. The tuition fees are extortionate and she certainly doesn't have any savings.

DEDUCTION

OTHER MODAL VERBS

We can use **might/may + be + -ing** to refer to deductions about things happening right now which are possibly true:

- She's not at her desk. She **might/may be having** lunch.
- You **might/may be wondering** what I've been up to recently and why I haven't been in touch.
- The person who stole all my money **might/may be sitting** on a beach enjoying the sun. The police have told me that is what often happens.
- He **might/may be catching up** with his emails. He said he was going to do that today.
- I don't know if she is really thinking about leaving the firm. She **might/may just be trying** to negotiate herself a higher salary.

DEDUCTION

OTHER MODAL VERBS

We can use **might/may + have + past participle** to refer to deductions about the past which are possibly true:

- Colleagues who missed the meeting **may/might not have received** the email. There have been a few problems with the server this week. (= There is a good reason to believe that this is possible)
- I thought she **might/may have missed** her bus, but when she arrived she explained that she had just overslept.
- I'm so sorry I can't visit you next week. I know you **might/may have taken** time off work and **planned** things for us to do. I feel terrible about cancelling at such short notice.
- I don't know where my keys are. There is a small hole in my pocket so they **might/may have fallen** out.

DEDUCTION

OTHER MODAL VERBS

We can use **might/may + have been + -ing** to refer to deductions about things which continued for a period in the past, and which are possibly true:

- He arrived out of breath and sweating. I think he **might/may have been running**, though he said he hadn't been.
- You shouldn't get too upset with the waiter. He **might/may have been dealing** with difficult customers all day.
- I don't know what Jamie did before he started working with us. He **might/may have been living** in Australia, since he has relatives there.
- I don't remember exactly what I was doing on July 21st. I **might/may have been working** in the garden because I often do that in the summer.

DEDUCTION

OTHER MODAL VERBS

We can use **can't/cannot / couldn't/could not** for negative deductions. It is usually safer to use **can't/cannot** for negative deductions in the present. We often use this form with **to be**:

- She **can't be** very happy about the company going bankrupt. She moved here especially for that job.
- You **can't** possibly **be** tired. You only woke up half an hour ago.
- It **can't be** easy being diabetic. You have to constantly monitor your blood and inject yourself every day.
- I don't believe they are splitting up. It **cannot be** true. It was only last week that they announced they were getting married.

DEDUCTION

OTHER MODAL VERBS

We can use **can't/cannot + -ing** to refer to negative deductions about things which are temporary or things which are happening right now:

- You **can't** still **be working** on that dissertation. You started it about five years ago.
- She **can't be living** in Mumbai. She clearly told me she was moving to Mombasa.
- I'm afraid she isn't coming to the concert with us tonight. She **can't be feeling** very well.
- You **can't** still **be thinking** about working there. You have won the lottery and you never need to work again.

DEDUCTION

OTHER MODAL VERBS

We can use **couldn't/could not** for negative deductions about the past, though **can't/cannot** is also possible:

- You **can't/couldn't have had** a very good holiday. Jakub said you got food poisoning on the first day and spent the entire week in bed.
- I'm sorry it took you so long to find my house. You **can't/couldn't have got off** the bus at the right stop.
- I asked them to meet me in the bar but they **can't/couldn't have understood** because I got a text to say they were outside the flat.
- You **can't/couldn't have spent** more than \$1 000 on your credit card last month. You were in hospital. There must be an error with the statement.

DEDUCTION

OTHER MODAL VERBS

We can use **can't/cannot / couldn't/could not + have been + -ing** to refer to a deduction about something which happened at one moment in the past or something which was continuous in the past:

- You **can't/couldn't have been working** there in 1999. My brother was in charge of that office and I would have met you.
- It **can't/couldn't have been raining** heavily at four o'clock. I woke up at half past four and the ground was completely dry.
- You **can't/couldn't have been sitting** in the library when I came in. I'm sure I would have seen you.
- Those students **can't/couldn't have been working** hard all morning: I saw them at lunchtime and they hadn't completed any of the questions.



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GRAMMAR FOR IELTS

**Deductions and
assumptions**

ASSUMPTION

EXPLANATION

- **ASSUMPTION** is the process of accepting that something is true, even though you do not have evidence, facts or proof.
- Candidates often need to use **ASSUMPTION** in their IELTS Writing and Speaking Tests.
- **ASSUMPTION** is sometimes used in the IELTS Reading and Listening Tests.
- We can use forms of **will, should** and **ought to** when we want to refer to **ASSUMPTION**.

ASSUMPTION

We can use **will** to describe assumptions about the present. We can use **will + infinitive** to describe things which are not deliberate:

- You'**ll be** shattered/exhausted after only getting home last night. You'**ll be** really jet-lagged! (= I'm sure you are tired even though I haven't asked you and I don't have proof or evidence)
- It **will be** the middle of the night in Australia. Don't call her for at least five hours. (= I'm sure it is the middle of the night even though I haven't checked)
- He'**ll be really** worried. You should text him! (= I'm sure he is really worried even though I do not have evidence)

ASSUMPTION

We can use **will** to describe assumptions about the present. We can use **will + be + -ing** to describe actions which are deliberate:

- Now would not be a good time to call her. She'll either **be having** something to eat or **putting** the children to bed. (= I'm sure she is doing one of these two things, even though I have no proof)
- She'll **be wondering** where you are. Give her a call! (= I'm sure she is wondering where you are, even though I don't have proof)
- He'll **be sitting** in a boring meeting, paying no attention to anything which is being said. (= I am sure he is in a meeting, even though I don't exactly know this for a fact)
- She **will be coming** over here now. (= I'm sure she is on her way over here now, even though I don't have proof or evidence)

ASSUMPTION

We can use **will + have + past participle** to describe assumptions about the past:

- It's late! She **will have finished** work. (= I am sure she finished work earlier, even though I don't have proof or evidence)
- He'll **have gone** to bed already. (= I'm sure he has gone to bed, even though I don't have proof or evidence)
- I'm sorry he didn't meet you as planned. He **will have forgotten** all about it. (= I am sure he has forgotten all about it, even though I don't have proof or evidence))
- That boyfriend of yours **won't have bought** you any flowers. I bet he's forgotten it's your anniversary! (= I'm sure he has forgotten)

ASSUMPTION

We can also use **will/will not + infinitive** to make assumptions about the future. This use is very similar to making predictions:

- You **will love** working there!
- You **will** soon **get** bored working in an office and **go** back to being a gardener.
- You **won't have** any difficulty finding our house.
- It **won't be** easy to settle down in a new country.
- You **won't like** that restaurant. I know how much you dislike spicy food and everything on the menu there has lots of spices in it.

ASSUMPTION

We can use **should** and **ought to** to describe expectations about things, when we are not completely sure. These verbs can describe assumptions about the present and the past:

- She **should be** there by now. (= There is good reason to believe that she is there now, but there is some doubt)
- He **should be tidying** his room as we speak. (= There is good reason to believe that this is happening at this moment, but there is doubt)
- The bus **ought to be arriving** about now. (= There is good reason to believe that the bus is arriving now, but there is doubt)
- He **should have handed** his essay in. (= There is good reason to believe this past action really happened, but there is some doubt)

ASSUMPTION

We can use **should** and **ought to** to make assumptions about the future:

- The course **shouldn't be** too hard. (= It is not possible to write **The course should be too hard.** We do not use **should** or **ought to** with ideas which we do not like)
- The course **should be / ought to be** reasonably easy. (= I expect that the course will be reasonably easy)
- You **should pass / ought to pass** that exam with flying colours. (= I expect that you will pass the exam in the future)
- The operation **shouldn't be** too painful because you'll have an anaesthetic. (= There is good reason to believe that the operation will not be too painful)



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PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Look at the following sentences. They all include deductions which the speaker/writer is (nearly) sure about. Try to complete each sentence:

EXAMPLE You've had an incredibly hard journey. You _____ be tired.

ANSWER: You've had an incredibly hard journey. You **must** be tired.

1. I'm sorry you have broken your leg. It _____ really hurt.
2. I think he _____ living somewhere around here. I keep seeing him in the bookshop and the supermarket.
3. You _____ wondering why it has taken me so long to reply to your lovely letter.
4. You _____ terrified when the pilot announced that the plane was running out of fuel and might have to land in the sea.
5. We _____ just missed each other. I arrived at the beginning of May and you left at the end of April.
6. I _____ sleeping in a strange position. When I woke up, my neck really hurt.
7. There _____ a solution to the environmental crisis we are currently facing. I'm sure somebody has the answer. (American English)
8. It _____ hard bringing up five children on your own. (American English)

ANSWERS

1. I'm sorry you have broken your leg. It **must** really hurt.
2. I think he **must be** living somewhere around here. I keep seeing him in the bookshop and the supermarket.
3. You **must be** wondering why it has taken me so long to reply to your lovely letter.
4. You **must have been** terrified when the pilot announced that the plane was running out of fuel and might have to land in the sea.
5. We **must have** just missed each other. I arrived at the beginning of May and you left at the end of April.
6. I **must have been** sleeping in a strange position. When I woke up, my neck really hurt.
7. There **has to be** a solution to the environmental crisis we are currently facing. I'm sure somebody has the answer. (American English)
8. It **had to be** hard bringing up five children on your own. (American English)

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Look at the following sentences. They all include deduction. Try to complete each sentence:

EXAMPLE: I don't know where he comes from. He has a strong accent so he c_____ be from another country.

ANSWER: I don't know where he comes from. He has a strong accent so he could be from another country

1. She mi_____ still b_____ at work. She sometimes doesn't finish until after eight in the evening.
2. I don't know where the party is. It c_____ b_____ at David's house because I know his family are all away this weekend.
3. They mi_____ b_____ having lunch right now. They usually eat around this time.
4. I thought that he mi_____ h_____ missed the train because he isn't exactly the most organised person in the world. Actually, he caught the train, but it got delayed.
5. There is a small hole in my pocket so the keys c_____ h_____ fallen through it while I was walking.
6. You shouldn't get too angry with your colleague. He mi_____ h_____ b_____ trying his best.
7. I don't know what he did before he moved to Thailand. He mi_____ h_____ b_____ living in New Zealand because he has relatives there.
8. You c_____ b_____ hungry. You only had breakfast an hour ago.
9. It c_____ b_____ true that they are getting divorced. I spoke to Julia only last week and she told me how happy they were together.
10. You c_____ h_____ b_____ working there last summer. My sister was managing the office at that time and she's never heard of you

ANSWERS

1. She **might** still **be** at work. She sometimes doesn't finish until after eight in the evening.
2. I don't know where the party is. It **could be** at David's house because I know his family are all away this weekend.
3. They **might be** having lunch right now. They usually eat around this time.
4. I thought that he **might have** missed the train because he isn't exactly the most organised person in the world. Actually, he caught the train, but it got delayed.
5. There is a small hole in my pocket so the keys **could have** fallen through it while I was walking.
6. You shouldn't get too angry with your colleague. He **might have been** trying his best.

7. I don't know what he did before he moved to Thailand. He **might have been** living in New Zealand because he has relatives there.
8. You **can't be** hungry. You only had breakfast an hour ago.
9. It **can't be** true that they are getting divorced. I spoke to Julia only last week and she told me how happy they were together.
10. You **couldn't/can't have been** working there last summer. My sister was managing the office at that time and she's never heard of you

PREPARE for IELTS: Grammar Exercises

Try to re-organise each group of words into a sentence which includes an assumption:

EXAMPLE: be boring the terrible that will is teacher lecture because

ANSWER: That lecture will be boring because the teacher is terrible.

1. her it of call please night be will so don't middle the in the Australia
2. because a you are where should wondering call give be you will her she
3. have now gone by to he will bed
4. won't terrible birthday yours that your remembered of have boyfriend
5. will office you get in an soon bored working
6. you restaurant won't that like
7. should she there now by be
8. feeling submitted will think his I he be great should he project have so teacher the to
9. shouldn't an will the you have anaesthetic because operation be too painful
10. the intelligence course your shouldn't of be someone for too hard

ANSWERS

1. It will be the middle of the night in Australia so please don't call her.
2. You should give her a call because she will be wondering where you are.
3. He will have gone to bed by now.
4. That terrible boyfriend of yours won't have remembered your birthday.
5. You will soon get bored working in an office.
6. You won't like that restaurant.
7. She should be there by now.
8. He should have submitted his project to the teacher so I think he will be feeling great.
9. The operation shouldn't be too painful because you will have an anaesthetic.
10. The course shouldn't be too hard for someone of your intelligence.