

D6.The Elixir of Life

modal verbs of deduction in the present

In a village in the mountains, a little old man with a beard and a young girl set up a stall in the market place one day, selling bottles of homemade medicine, labelled 'The Elixir of Life'.

'Come on, everyone!' the old man called out. 'Don't miss your chance to beat ageing. This is your opportunity to buy Archie's miracle medicine. It's the only medicine that cures old age. You only have to look at me to see the proof. I'm two hundred and five years old.'

A crowd quickly gathered around the market stall, and the old man and the girl were kept busy handing out the bottle of medicine and taking the money.

There were two younger men in the crowd, and one of them said to the other, 'You don't really think he's genuine, do you?'

'I don't know. He **might be** telling the truth. He's got an honest face.'

'You've **got to be** kidding! said the man. 'He **must be** lying. It **has to be** a trick.'

'Well, why not ask his assistant, then, if you don't believe it?' suggested his friend. So the man approached the girl and asked. 'He **can't really be** that old, can he? That's completely ridiculous. Tell me the truth, is he really two hundred and five years old?'

'I'm sorry, sir, but I can't really say.' the girl replied, 'I've only been working for him for the past seventy five years.'



Grammar: modal verbs of deduction

When you make logical deductions and draw conclusions from evidence you can use these forms. The choice of verb communicates how certain or uncertain you are about your guesses.

I'm sure it's true.

It **must be** true.

It **has to be** true.

It's **got to be** true.

I'm not sure.

It **might be** true.

It **may be** true.

It **could be** true.

I'm sure it's impossible.

It **can't be** true.

Note that the opposite of *It must be...* is *It can't be...*, [not ~~*It mustn't be...*~~]

Complete these sentences with *must be*, *might be* or *can't be*.

- A:** Is Dave at work at the moment?
B: No, he _____ at work today. He never works on Sundays.
- A:** Do you think there is anyone inside that apartment?
B: Yes, there _____. There are a lot of lights on.
- A:** Where's Kathy?
B: I really don't know, but she _____ at the dentists.
- A:** Look at that woman! Do you think she's a model?
B: I'm not sure. She _____ a model, a singer or an actor. I've no idea.
- A:** I passed all my exams!
B: You _____ very pleased with yourself!
- A:** You know that Henry is in Mexico today.
B: That's impossible! He _____! I saw him in his office five minutes ago.
- A:** I can't work out this number here. Your handwriting is really bad!
B: I know. It a _____ five or an eight, but I can't really tell.
- A:** Have you seen how many sport prizes Karl has?
B: Yes. He _____ a real athlete.

Vocabulary exercises

Match the broken sentences.

- The delicious smell of homemade... **A.** place in the centre of the city

2. I bought this watch from a market...
3. The doctor said it was nothing but old...
4. If you don't buy it now it will be a missed...
5. The bank is near the market....

- B. stall last week
- C. opportunity and you'll be sorry later.
- D. bread filled the house.
- E. age so there was nothing he could do.

There's one mistake in each of these expressions. Find it and correct it.

6. You've got to be kid.
7. Don't miss your change.
8. You've got the honest face.
9. Say me the truth.
10. That's ridiculous completely.

Choose the correct preposition to complete these sentences.

11. Will took some papers from his briefcase and handed them **by / out / at** to everyone round the table.
12. The farmer decided to set **up / off / in** a stall to sell his produce directly to the public.
13. If you want to see some magic, gather **off / in / round** and be amazed!
14. Sam went **down / at / up** to the girl at the bar and asked her out.
15. My brother works **by / for / of** a large computer software company in the city.

ANSWERS