

# 10

## May, might, could, and should

### May and might for possibility

1 Some examples of **may** and **might**:  
 Take an umbrella because it **might** rain later.  
 We **may not** have enough money.

2 Forms of **may/might**:

#### POSITIVE

**may/might** + verb

I **might** buy a new guitar next week.

#### NEGATIVE

**may not/might not** + verb

The traffic **may not be** bad today.

We do not usually form questions with **may** or **might**.

We usually use the full forms (**may not** / **might not**) for negatives.

We can use the negative short form **mightn't** but we do not use a short form of **may not**:

She **mightn't** be angry with you.

3 We use **may** and **might** for the present and the future:

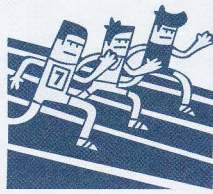
I **might not have** enough money with me now.

I **may not have** enough money next month.

### Grammar in action

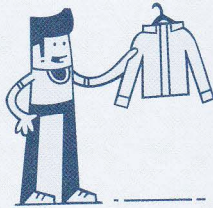
1 We use **may** and **might** to say that something is possible, but not certain, in the future:

Runner number 7 **may/might** win the race. (= It's possible that number 7 will win.)



2 We use **may** and **might** to say that it is possible, but not certain, that something is true in the present:

This shirt **may/might** fit me.



**May** is often less certain than **might**. We often use **may** to make it clear that something is possible but that we do not think it will happen. We often use **might** to make it clear that it really is possible that something will happen. Here, someone is talking about the possibility of getting tickets for a concert by a very popular band:

TIP

We **may** get tickets but I don't think we will.  
 We **might** get tickets if we phone today.

## A The cinema tonight

Complete this conversation, using **might** or **might not** and the verbs in brackets.

- LUKE I might go<sup>0</sup> (go) the cinema tonight. I think I .....<sup>1</sup> (see) that new film, *Wild Thing*.
- STANLEY Oh, I .....<sup>2</sup> (come) with you. I think it .....<sup>3</sup> (be) good.
- LUKE Well, you .....<sup>4</sup> (not enjoy) it. I think you .....<sup>5</sup> (find) it boring.
- STANLEY Why?
- LUKE Well, it's a comedy, but you .....<sup>6</sup> (not think) that it's very funny.
- STANLEY You .....<sup>7</sup> (not be) right about that. It .....<sup>8</sup> (make) me laugh a lot. The reviews say that it's very funny.
- LUKE Yes, that's true. But we .....<sup>9</sup> (have) a problem. We .....<sup>10</sup> (not get in) because the cinema .....<sup>11</sup> (be) full.
- STANLEY Oh, yes. Lots of people .....<sup>12</sup> (want) to see it. There .....<sup>13</sup> (be) a big queue. We .....<sup>14</sup> (have to) get there very early.
- LUKE Just a minute! We .....<sup>15</sup> (be able to) book tickets on the phone.
- STANLEY Ah, good idea! I'll find the number and phone it.



## B What are you going to do next summer?

Complete these sentences written by a group of students about their plans for the summer, using *might* or *might not* and the correct verbs from the box. Use each verb in the box only once.

visit do come get read rain take  
spend want find travel have work be

- 0 I might work in a shop but I might not find a job easily.  
 1 I \_\_\_\_\_ a summer job, but it \_\_\_\_\_ easy to find one.  
 2 I \_\_\_\_\_ Spain, but I \_\_\_\_\_ enough money to do that.  
 3 I \_\_\_\_\_ around Europe and my friend \_\_\_\_\_ with me.  
 4 I \_\_\_\_\_ some books for school, but I \_\_\_\_\_ to do that.  
 5 It \_\_\_\_\_ at all and I \_\_\_\_\_ every day outdoors.  
 6 I \_\_\_\_\_ anything, I \_\_\_\_\_ it easy all the time.

## C Possible but unlikely

Complete this voicemail message, using *may* or *may not* and the verbs in the box.

get be able to have leave be have to last arrive get back

Hi Kate, it's Charles here. I'm just calling to tell you that I maybe<sup>0</sup> a bit late tonight. I don't think it's going to happen but I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> at the restaurant at exactly 8 o'clock. The problem is that I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> work late today. There's a meeting here at 4 and it \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> until 6, so I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> the building until about 6.30. At that time, I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> stuck in traffic and I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> home until about 7.30. Then I have to get changed and I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup> a shower, so I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup> get to the restaurant for 8. Sorry about that. See you this evening, anyway.

## D The visitor

Complete this email about a visit, using the phrases in the box. For some gaps you will need to form negatives.

may/organize may/say might/get on might/want  
may/do might/speak might/forget may/book may/go  
might/have might/offer might/be might/be able to

A French girl is coming to stay with me and my family next month and I'm not quite sure what to do with her when she's here. I think we might have<sup>0</sup> some language problems because she \_\_\_\_\_<sup>1</sup> very good English, but I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup> right about that. She \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup> to spend her time going to museums and art galleries. I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup> a guided tour of one of them but I'm not sure about that. Another thing that I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup> with her is that I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup> a party for her. Some of my friends \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup> very well with her and they \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup> to go places with her. But I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup> organize a party so I \_\_\_\_\_<sup>10</sup> about that idea. I'm a bit worried that her visit \_\_\_\_\_<sup>11</sup> well and that she \_\_\_\_\_<sup>12</sup> that she's had a good time when she gets home. But I'm hoping that everything will be fine.



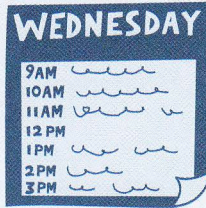
4 We can use the positive form **could** to say that we believe that something is possible in the present or future. (In this way, **could** has the same meaning as **may** and **might**.)  
*It **might** rain tomorrow or it **could be** sunny.*

5 We cannot use **couldn't** to talk about a future or present possibility. We only use the negative form **couldn't** to talk about possibility in the past. (See unit 9 on p. 34.)

### Grammar in action

3 We use **could** to say that something is possible because the subject is able to do it or has the opportunity to do it:

*I **could** see you at 12 o'clock on Wednesday.*



We often use phrases like **I think, I should think, I suppose, I guess, I reckon, etc.**, before **may, might** and **could** to give our opinion that something is possible:

*I **think** my dad **might** phone tonight.*

*I **guess** that shop **may** have what you want.*

*I **reckon** I **could** finish this work today.*

TIP

4 We can use **should** and **shouldn't** for the present and future to say that we think that something good in the future probably will or probably won't happen. (We are more certain when we use **should** than when we use **may** or **might**.) Here, someone is talking about a journey:

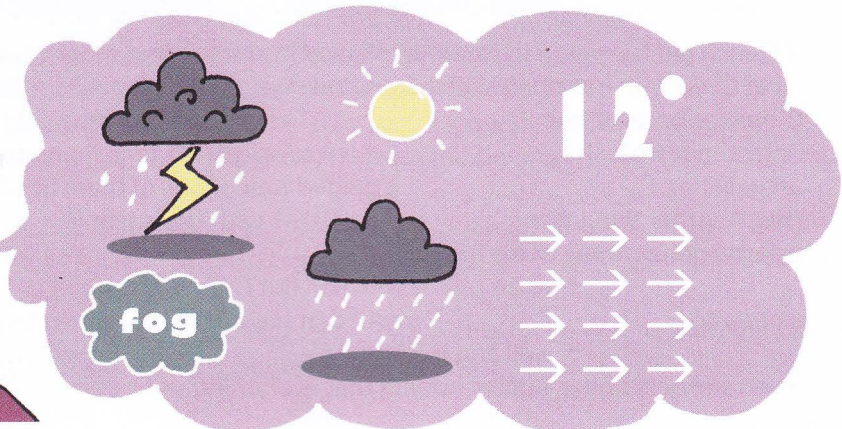
*I **should** arrive at 7 p.m. but I'll be later if there's a lot of traffic.*

*I **might** be late because the traffic **might** be bad.*

### E The weather forecast

Complete this weather forecast, using **might** and **could** and the verbs in brackets. If both **might** and **could** are correct, use both of them.

Tomorrow will be a wet day in many parts of Britain. The rain might/could be<sup>0</sup> (be) very heavy in the North but it might not be<sup>0</sup> (be) so heavy in the South. In the north, thunderstorms .....<sup>1</sup> (arrive) early in the morning and the weather conditions .....<sup>2</sup> (make) driving difficult. However, it .....<sup>3</sup> (be) as cold as it was today and temperatures .....<sup>4</sup> (rise) to 12°C. In the Midlands, fog .....<sup>5</sup> (appear) on high ground early in the morning but this will clear away by lunchtime. There will be rain in the afternoon, but this .....<sup>6</sup> (last) for very long and there .....<sup>7</sup> (be) only light showers. Temperatures will be around 10°C but it .....<sup>8</sup> (feel) as warm as that because of the cold winds. The weather will be better in the South and people there .....<sup>9</sup> (enjoy) some sunny periods. There will be some rain, but it .....<sup>10</sup> (rain) at all in some parts of the South.



## F Plans for the weekend

Complete these plans for the weekend, using *might* or *could* and the verbs in brackets. Use *could* if it is more appropriate than *might*.

- 0 I might buy (buy) a new coat because I need one.
- 0 I could meet (meet) you tomorrow night because I'm not doing anything then.
- 1 I ..... (invite) some friends for dinner but I haven't decided yet.
- 2 I ..... (get) my hair cut because it's very long at the moment.
- 3 I ..... (do) some training at the gym because I want to get fit.
- 4 I ..... (go) to the match tomorrow because there are plenty of tickets.
- 5 I ..... (do) some cleaning because my flat is very dirty.
- 6 I ..... (give) you a lift to the party because my brother is lending me his car.
- 7 I ..... (stay) at home all weekend because I'm quite tired.
- 8 I ..... (have) a great time because I can do anything I want.

Before you do exercise F, answer this question. If someone offers you a lift, that person is offering to:

- A take you to a place you want to go to.
- B give you some useful information.
- C buy something for you.
- D tell you how to get to a place.

## G A possible arrangement

Complete this conversation between students at the end of a day at college, using *might* or *should* and the phrases below the text. Use *should* if it is more appropriate than *might*.

- LILY What did you think of that test?
- GLENN I don't know. I might not pass<sup>0</sup> because I didn't know some of the answers.
- LILY Oh, you should get<sup>0</sup> a good mark. You always do well in the tests.
- GLENN Well, .....<sup>1</sup> this time. ....<sup>2</sup> this one.
- LILY No, .....<sup>3</sup> that badly. It wasn't that difficult. Anyway, where are you going now?
- GLENN A friend's house.
- LILY Is it a long way from here?
- GLENN No, .....<sup>4</sup> long to get there, it's not very far. In fact, .....<sup>5</sup> there in about half an hour.
- LILY What are you going to do there?
- GLENN I don't know. I guess .....<sup>6</sup> some computer games and I reckon .....<sup>7</sup> a film.
- LILY So you're not going out tonight?
- GLENN Well, .....<sup>8</sup> at his house the whole evening. I suppose .....<sup>9</sup> to go out.
- LILY Ah. Well, I'm going to that new club, The Workhouse. I think .....<sup>10</sup> good fun. I've heard about it from other people and they say it's great.

- |             |           |             |
|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| 0 I/pass    | 3 you/do  | 7 we/watch  |
| 0 you/get   | 4 it/take | 8 we/stay   |
| 1 it/happen | 5 I/get   | 9 we/decide |
| 2 I/fail    | 6 we/play | 10 it/be    |

**OVER TO YOU** Now go to page 123.