

UNIT 29 May (have) and might (have)

a) Study this example situation:

You are looking for Jack. Nobody knows for sure where he is but you get some suggestions:

He **may be** in his office. (= perhaps he is in his office)

He **might be having** lunch. (= perhaps he is having lunch)

Ask Ann. She **might know**. (= perhaps Ann knows)

We use **may** and **might** to say that something is possible. There is no important difference between **may** and **might**. You can say:

– He **may be** in his office. *or* He **might be** in his office.

The negative is **may not** and **might not** (or **mightn't**):

– Jack **might not be** in his office. (= perhaps he isn't in his office)

– I'm not sure whether I can lend you any money. I **may not have** enough.
(= perhaps I don't have enough)

Study the structure:

I/you/he (etc.)	{ may might	(not)	{ be in his office be having/waiting etc. know/have/do etc.
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b) To say what was possible in the past, we use **may have (done)** and **might have (done)**:

– A: I wonder why Ann didn't answer the doorbell.

B: Well, I suppose she **may have been** in the bath. (= perhaps she **was** in the bath)

– A: Why didn't he say hello when he passed us in the street?

B: He **might have been day-dreaming**. (= perhaps he **was day-dreaming**)

– A: I can't find my bag anywhere.

B: You **might have left** it in the shop. (= perhaps you **left** it)

– A: I wonder why Ann didn't come to the meeting.

B: She **might not have known** about it. (= perhaps she **didn't know**)

Study the structure:

I/you/he (etc.)	{ may might	(not)	have	{ been in the bath been day-dreaming/waiting etc. known/left/had etc.
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c) You can use **could** instead of **may** or **might**. But with **could** the possibility is smaller:

– 'Where's Jack?' 'I'm not sure. He **could be** in his office, I suppose, but he's not usually there at this time.'

For **may** and **might** see also Units 30 and 31.

Unit 29 Exercises

29.1 In this exercise you have to make sentences with **may** or **might**. The first four sentences are present.

Examples: 'Do you know if Jack is in his office?' 'I'm not sure. He may be in his office.'
'Do you know if Ann likes ice-cream?' 'I'm not sure. She might like ice-cream.'

- 1 'Do you know if they are married?' 'I'm not sure. They
- 2 'Do you know if she wants to go?' 'I'm not sure
- 3 'Do you know if he's telling the truth?' 'I'm
- 4 'Do you know if he has a car?' 'I

The next three sentences are past.

Examples: 'Do you know if he was serious?' 'I'm not sure. He might have been serious.'
'Do you know if they were looking?' 'I'm not sure. They may have been looking.'

- 5 'Do you know if she was ill?' 'I'm not sure. She
- 6 'Do you know if she told anybody?' 'I
- 7 'Do you know if they were listening?' '

And now you have to use **may not** or **might not**.

Example: 'Is Jack in his office?' 'I'm not sure. He might not be in his office.'

- 8 'Does she want to go?' '
- 9 'Is he telling the truth?' '
- 10 'Are they ready?' '

29.2 This time you have to write sentences to explain each situation. Use the words in brackets to make your sentences.

Example: I can't find George anywhere. I wonder where he is.

- a) (he might / go / shopping) He might have gone shopping.
- b) (he could / play / tennis) He could be playing tennis.

- 1 Look! Sue's going out. I wonder where she's going.
 - a) (she may / go / to the theatre)
 - b) (she could / go / to a party)
- 2 Why didn't Tom answer the doorbell? I'm sure he was in the house at the time.
 - a) (he may / go / to bed early)
 - b) (he might not / hear / the bell)
 - c) (he could / be / in the bath)
- 3 How do you think the fire started?
 - a) (someone may / drop / a cigarette)
 - b) (it could / be / an electrical fault)
- 4 I wonder where Tom was going when you saw him.
 - a) (he might / go / to work)
 - b) (he may / go / shopping)
- 5 George didn't come to the party. I wonder why not.
 - a) (he might / have / to go somewhere else)
 - b) (he may not / know / about it)