

May or might. Modals summary

Grammar Lesson, Examples & 30 Practice Questions

May or Might: Modals Summary

In English, we use special verbs called **modal verbs** to talk about possibility, permission, and other ideas. Two very common modal verbs are **may** and **might**. In this lesson, we will learn what **may** and **might** mean, how to use them, and how they are different from each other.

A **modal verb** is a helper verb. It comes before the main verb and changes its meaning. Here are two simple examples:

"It **may** rain today." (= Perhaps it will rain.)

"She **might** be at home." (= Perhaps she is at home.)

Both sentences talk about something that is **possible** — we are not sure, but it could happen. Let us look at the rules step by step.

What Are May and Might?

Before we look at the rules, let us understand a simple situation.

*Tom looks at the sky. The sky is grey. He says: "It **may** rain." Later, his friend says: "Yes, it **might** rain. Take an umbrella!"*

Tom and his friend are not certain about the rain. They think it is possible. That is why they use **may** and **might**.

Here are the key things to know about **may** and **might**:

- They are **modal verbs**.
- They do **not** change form. We do not add **-s**, **-ed**, or **-ing**.
- The main verb after them is always in its **base form** (the simple, dictionary form — e.g. go, be, eat, rain).
- We do **not** use **to** between the modal and the main verb.

Rule Breakdown: How to Form Sentences with May and Might

Positive Sentences (Affirmative)

The pattern is simple:

Subject + may / might + base verb

Examples:

- I **may** go to the park later.

- She **might** be tired.
- They **may** eat dinner at 7 o'clock.
- It **might** snow tonight.
- He **may** know the answer.

Notice: The verb after **may** or **might** does not change — it is always the base form. We say "**She might be**", not "**She might is**".

Negative Sentences

To make a negative sentence, we add **not** after **may** or **might**:

Subject + may not / might not + base verb

Examples:

- I **may not** come to the party.
- She **might not** be at school today.
- They **may not** have enough money.
- It **might not** rain after all.

We can also use the contraction **mightn't** for **might not**. However, there is **no** common contraction for **may not**. We do not usually say "mayn't" in modern English.

Questions with May and Might

To make a question, we put **may** or **might** before the subject:

May / Might + subject + base verb?

Examples:

- **May** I use your phone? (= Is it okay if I use your phone?)
- **Might** she be at the office?
- **May** we sit here?

Note: In everyday questions about possibility, we more often use **might** or other structures. We mostly use "**May I...?**" to ask for **permission** (asking if something is allowed).

The Main Uses of May and Might

Use 1: Possibility (Maybe Something Will Happen)

We use **may** and **might** to say that something is **possible**. We are not sure. It could happen or it might not happen.

- I **may** visit my grandmother this weekend. (= Perhaps I will visit her.)
- He **might** be late for the meeting. (= Perhaps he will be late.)
- We **may** move to a new house next year.
- They **might** not like the food.

Use 2: Permission (Asking If Something Is Allowed) — May

We also use **may** (not usually **might**) to ask for **permission** in a polite way. This means we are asking if we are **allowed** to do something.

- **May** I open the window? (= Is it okay if I open the window?)
- **May** I leave the room?
- **May** we take a photo here?

A teacher can also use **may** to give or refuse permission:

- "Yes, you **may** leave early today." (= Yes, you are allowed.)
- "No, you **may not** use your phone in class." (= No, it is not allowed.)

May or Might: What Is the Difference?

Many learners ask: *"Are may and might the same? Can I always use one instead of the other?"*

For A2 level, the answer is: **they are very similar** when we talk about possibility. However, there are some small differences to know:

Point	May	Might
Possibility	Yes — something is possible	Yes — something is possible
How certain?	A little more certain (but still not sure)	A little less certain (even more unsure)
Permission	Yes — "May I...?" is polite	Rarely used for permission
Formality	Slightly more formal	Slightly less formal / more everyday
Negative	may not (no common contraction)	might not / mightn't

Simple tip: In most everyday conversations about possibility, you can use **may** or **might** and the meaning is almost the same. Just remember to use **may** when asking for permission.

Full Sentence Pattern Table

Subject	May / Might	Base Verb	Example Sentence
I	may	go	I may go to the cinema tonight.
You	might	need	You might need a jacket.
He	may	be	He may be at work.
She	might	know	She might know the answer.
It	may	rain	It may rain this afternoon.

Subject	May / Might	Base Verb	Example Sentence
We	might	eat	We might eat at the restaurant.
They	may	arrive	They may arrive late.
I	may not	come	I may not come to the party.
He	might not	be	He might not be happy about it.

May and Might: Quick Rules to Remember

Here is a short summary of the main rules:

- **May** and **might** do not change for different subjects. (No -s, no -ed, no -ing)
- Always use the **base form** of the main verb after **may** or **might**.
- Do **not** use **to** after **may** or **might**.
- Use **may not** or **might not** for negatives.
- Use "**May I...?**" to ask for permission politely.
- Both **may** and **might** express possibility — something that is not sure.

Modals Summary: Other Common Modal Verbs

In English, there are several modal verbs. Here is a short summary so you can see how **may** and **might** fit with the others you may already know:

Modal Verb	Main Use	Example
can	Ability / Permission	I can swim. / Can I sit here?
could	Past ability / Polite requests / Possibility	She could run fast when she was young. / Could you help me?
must	Obligation / Strong necessity	You must wear a seatbelt.
should	Advice / Recommendation	You should drink more water.
will	Future / Decisions	I will call you later.
would	Polite requests / Conditionals	Would you like some tea?
may	Possibility / Permission	It may snow. / May I come in?
might	Possibility (less certain)	She might be busy.

Remember: All modal verbs follow the same basic rule — they come before the main verb, and the main verb stays in the **base form**.

Important Differences and Special Cases

May vs. Can for Permission

In everyday English, many people use **can** to ask for permission:

"Can I use your pen?"

This is very common and perfectly fine in conversation. However, **may** is more **formal** and more **polite**:

"May I use your pen?"

Both are correct. Use **may** when you want to sound more polite or formal — for example, in a classroom, a shop, or with people you do not know well.

Might vs. Could for Possibility

We can also use **could** to talk about possibility:

- It **might** rain. = It **could** rain. (Both mean: perhaps it will rain.)
- She **might** be at home. = She **could** be at home.

At A2 level, these are almost the same. Just remember they are all about **possibility** — something is not certain.

May Not vs. Must Not

Be careful! **May not** and **must not** have very different meanings:

- **May not** = perhaps not / possibly not (possibility)
"She may not be at home." = Perhaps she is not at home.
- **Must not** = it is not allowed / forbidden (obligation)
"You must not smoke here." = Smoking is forbidden here.

Common Mistakes

Here are some common mistakes that learners make with **may** and **might**:

✗ She *might is* tired.

✓ **She might be tired.** (Always use the base form after a modal verb.)

✗ He *mights* come later.

✓ **He might come later.** (Modal verbs never take -s, even with he/she/it.)

✗ They *may to* go to the party.

✓ **They may go to the party.** (Do not use "to" after a modal verb.)

✗ I *might not to* know the answer.

✓ **I might not know the answer.** (No "to" after a modal verb.)

✗ May she *is* at home?

✓ **Might she *be* at home?** (Use the base form, not the conjugated form.)

✗ He *may* not come — it is forbidden.

✓ **He *must not* come — it is forbidden.** ("May not" is for possibility, not rules.)

Contractions with May and Might

A **contraction** is when we join two words together and use an apostrophe (') to show letters are missing.

- **might not** → **mightn't** (common in spoken English)
"She mightn't be at home."
- **may not** — there is **no common contraction**. We do not usually write or say "mayn't" in modern English. Always write **may not** as two separate words.

May or Might: Quick Summary

Here are the key points from this lesson on **may and might**:

- **May** and **might** are **modal verbs**.
- We use them to talk about **possibility** — something that is not certain.
- We use **may** (not usually *might*) to ask for **permission** politely.
- The main verb after **may** or **might** is always the **base form**.
- Never add **-s**, **-ed**, or **-ing** to **may** or **might**.
- Never use **to** between the modal verb and the main verb.
- Negative forms: **may not** and **might not** (or *mightn't*).
- **May** is slightly more formal and certain; **might** is slightly less certain — but for everyday use, they are very similar.
- Do not confuse **may not** (possibility) with **must not** (something is forbidden).

Now practise **may and might** in the exercises below.

May or might. Modals summary – Practice Test

A2 | 30 Questions: Multiple Choice, Fill-in-the-Gap & Fill-in-the-Blank

Part 1: Multiple Choice (Questions 1–10)

1 I'm not sure, but it ____ rain later. The sky looks dark.

- A** will
- B** must
- C** may
- D** should

2 She ____ come to the party. She hasn't decided yet.

- A** might
- B** must
- C** will
- D** can

3 Which sentence is correct?

- A** He may to go home early.
- B** He might goes home early.
- C** He may go home early.
- D** He might going home early.

4 Tom ____ be at school. I saw his bag there.

- A** might
- B** can
- C** will
- D** should

5 I ____ go shopping tomorrow. I haven't decided yet.

- A** must
- B** may
- C** will
- D** can

6 Which word has a SIMILAR meaning to 'might'?

- A** must
- B** may
- C** will
- D** can

7 It ____ snow tonight. The temperature is very low.

- A** might
- B** must
- C** shall
- D** can

8 She ____ not like the gift. We're not sure.

- A** will
- B** must
- C** may
- D** shall

9 The keys ____ be in your bag. Did you check?

- A** can
- B** might
- C** will
- D** shall

10 We ____ visit Grandma this weekend, but we are not sure yet.

- A** must
- B** will
- C** may
- D** should

Part 2: Fill in the Gap (Questions 11–20)

11 It looks cloudy. It ____ rain later today.

- A** might
- B** must
- C** should

12 I'm not sure where Tom is. He ____ be at the library.

- A** may
- B** will
- C** must

13 She ____ come to the party — she hasn't decided yet.

- A** might
- B** can
- C** would

14 ____ I use your phone, please?

- A** May
- B** Might
- C** Should

15 He ____ not be hungry because he just had lunch.

- A** might
- B** must
- C** will

16 You look tired. You ____ want to get some rest.

- A** may
- B** might
- C** must

17 I ____ not go to school tomorrow if I feel sick.

- A** might
- B** should
- C** can

18 There's a chance the shop ____ be closed on Sunday.

- A** may
- B** will
- C** shall

19 Take an umbrella — it ____ get cold outside.

- A** might
- B** must
- C** would

20 She ____ know the answer — let's ask her.

- A** may
- B** shall
- C** must

Part 3: Fill in the Blank (Questions 21–30)

21 It is cloudy today. It _____ rain later.

22 She is not sure about her plans. She _____ come to the party tonight.

23 We use may or might with the base form of the verb. Complete the sentence: He _____ be at home right now.

24 I don't know where my keys are. They _____ be in my bag.

25 To make might negative, we say might not. Complete: They _____ arrive on time because of the traffic.

26 Complete the sentence with the correct modal: I _____ go to school tomorrow because I feel sick.

27 Look at those dark clouds! It _____ snow this evening.

28 After may or might, the verb does NOT change. Complete: She might _____ to the library after school.

29 I am not sure what he wants for his birthday. He _____ want a new book.

30

Might is often used for things that are less certain than may. Choose the correct modal: We _____ visit grandma, but we are really not sure.

Answer Key & Explanations

May or might. Modals summary | A2

Part 1: Multiple Choice

1. **C** Correct Answer: may ✓ Explanation: We use may to say something is possible but not certain. It may rain later means we are not sure.
2. **A** Correct Answer: might ✓ Explanation: We use might when something is possible but not certain. She might come means we don't know yet.
3. **C** Correct Answer: He may go home early. ✓ Explanation: After may and might, we always use the base form of the verb (no to, no -s, no -ing). He may go is correct.
4. **A** Correct Answer: might ✓ Explanation: We use might to make a guess about something. Tom might be at school means it is possible but not sure.
5. **B** Correct Answer: may ✓ Explanation: We use may to talk about something that is possible in the future when we are not sure. I may go shopping shows uncertainty.
6. **B** Correct Answer: may ✓ Explanation: May and might both express possibility. They have a very similar meaning. She may come and She might come mean almost the same thing.
7. **A** Correct Answer: might ✓ Explanation: We use might to say something is possible. It might snow tonight means snow is possible but not certain.
8. **C** Correct Answer: may ✓ Explanation: We use may not to say something is possibly not true. She may not like the gift means we are not sure about her reaction.
9. **B** Correct Answer: might ✓ Explanation: We use might to make a suggestion or guess. The keys might be in your bag means it is possible they are there.
10. **C** Correct Answer: may ✓ Explanation: We use may to talk about a possible plan when we are not certain. We may visit Grandma means it is possible but not decided.

Part 2: Fill in the Gap

11. **A** Correct Answer: might ✓ Explanation: We use might to say something is possible but not certain. It might rain later today. means there is a chance of rain.
12. **A** Correct Answer: may ✓ Explanation: We use may to express possibility when we are not sure. He may be at the library means it is possible but not certain.
13. **A** Correct Answer: might ✓ Explanation: Might is used for uncertain plans or possibilities. She might come to the party means it is possible but not confirmed.

14. **A** Correct Answer: May ✔ Explanation: We use May I...? to ask for permission politely. May I use your phone? is a polite and formal request.
15. **A** Correct Answer: might ✔ Explanation: Might not expresses that something is possibly not true. He might not be hungry means it is possible that he is not hungry.
16. **A** Correct Answer: may ✔ Explanation: May can be used to give a polite suggestion or express possibility. You may want to get some rest is a gentle suggestion.
17. **A** Correct Answer: might ✔ Explanation: Might not is used to talk about something that is possibly not going to happen. I might not go to school tomorrow shows uncertainty.
18. **A** Correct Answer: may ✔ Explanation: May is used to talk about something that is possibly true. The shop may be closed on Sunday means it is possible.
19. **A** Correct Answer: might ✔ Explanation: We use might when something is possible but not certain. It might get cold outside is advice based on a possibility.
20. **A** Correct Answer: may ✔ Explanation: May is used to say something is possible. She may know the answer means it is possible that she knows.

Part 3: Fill in the Blank

21. **may/might** Correct Answer: may / might ✔ Explanation: We use may or might to talk about possibility in the present or future. It might rain later means it is possible but not certain.
22. **may/might** Correct Answer: may / might ✔ Explanation: May and might both express uncertainty about the future. She might come means she is not sure yet.
23. **might** Correct Answer: might ✔ Explanation: After might, we always use the base form of the verb. He might be — not he might is.
24. **may/might** Correct Answer: may / might ✔ Explanation: We use may or might when we are not sure about something. They may be in my bag means it is possible.
25. **might not** Correct Answer: might not ✔ Explanation: The negative form of might is might not. They might not arrive means it is possible they will not arrive.
26. **may not** Correct Answer: may not ✔ Explanation: The negative form of may is may not. I may not go means it is possible I will not go.
27. **may/might** Correct Answer: may / might ✔ Explanation: We use may or might to say something is possible in the future. It might snow is a possibility, not a certainty.
28. **go** Correct Answer: go ✔ Explanation: After modal verbs like might, we always use the base form of the verb. She might go — not she might goes.

29. **might|may** Correct Answer: might / may ✓ Explanation: Might and may are used to express possibility. He might want a book means we are not sure, but it is possible.

30. **might** Correct Answer: might ✓ Explanation: Might is used when something is less certain. We might visit grandma means the possibility is small or we are very unsure.

Score Guide

27–30 Correct Excellent! You have mastered this topic.

23–26 Correct Very good! Review the rules you missed.

18–22 Correct Good start. Re-read the lesson and examples.

0–17 Correct Study the lesson again before retaking the test.