

43 Making deductions

In English, you can add an extra verb (called a “modal verb”) to show if a statement is likely or unlikely. You may hear modal verbs when people talk about sickness.

⚙️ **New language** “Might” and “could”

Aa **Vocabulary** Health and sickness

🧑 **New skill** Talking about possibility

43.1 KEY LANGUAGE “MIGHT” AND “COULD”

The modal verbs “might” and “could” are useful for saying that you’re not sure about something.

Use “might” and “could” when something is not certain.

John has a sore ankle. It **{ might
could }** be broken.

The modal verb doesn’t change with the subject.

The modal verb is usually followed by the base form of the main verb.



Use “might not” to describe a negative that is not certain.

It’s not very swollen, so it **might not** be serious.

“Not” sits after the modal verb.



Use “could not” and “couldn’t” to say that something was not possible in the past.

His ankle was so sore yesterday that he **{ could not
couldn’t }** walk.



Use “cannot” and “can’t” when you’re certain something is impossible.

It **{ cannot
can’t }** be broken because John walked to the doctor.



43.2 FURTHER EXAMPLES “MIGHT” AND “COULD”

Fay’s got a sore throat and isn’t feeling well. She **might** have a cold.



I was so sick last week that I **couldn’t** get out of bed.



My eyes are itchy and I have a runny nose. It **could** be hay fever.



I **can’t** have the flu because I don’t have a high temperature.





43.3 FILL IN THE GAPS USING THE WORDS IN THE PANEL

I might be able to change your doctor's appointment time for you.

- 1 Carla felt so sick last weekend that she _____ go back to work until Wednesday.
- 2 Bastian _____ be able to come over as he's allergic to most pets, and I have three dogs.
- 3 Your wrist _____ be broken as you're able to lean on it without much pain.
- 4 I recommend you go to the hospital. Your stomach pain _____ be appendicitis.

couldn't

~~might~~

can't

could

might not



43.4 LISTEN TO THE AUDIO AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS



Jess and Boris are wondering why their manager, Selina, is not at work today.

Selina is at a marketing conference.

True ☐ False ☒ Not given ☐

- 1 Selina gets the bus to work.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐
- 2 Selina can't be sick today.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐
- 3 Selina might have caught the flu from James.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐
- 4 Boris doesn't need Selina's help with the report.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐
- 5 Jess says Boris might be able to contact Selina.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐



43.5 RESPOND TO THE AUDIO, SPEAKING OUT LOUD

Doctor, my son's wrist is sore.

It could be sprained.

- 1 Yes, I did walk here. But I think it's broken.

It _____ be broken.

- 2 My boss had a bad cough yesterday.

He _____ go to work today.

- 3 I've got a sore throat and a headache.

You _____ have a cold.

- 4 I heard you weren't very well yesterday.

I _____ get out of bed!





43.6 MATCH THE BEGINNINGS OF THE SENTENCES TO THE CORRECT ENDINGS

It can't be morning already;

so it might be lost.

1 I can't find my doctor's letter,

because it's red and swollen.

2 My hay fever could be getting worse

and might need an operation on her knee.

3 Marco's arm could be infected

I've hardly had any sleep.

4 I think my dad has a cold

because my eyes are itchy and sore.

5 Jackie had a skiing accident

you might need to go to the doctor.

6 If you don't feel any better soon,

because he can't stop sneezing.

7 That can't be Ailsa skating over there

so we might be late for the appointment.

8 We're stuck in traffic

because her ankle's broken.



43.7 CROSS OUT THE INCORRECT WORD IN EACH SENTENCE



The doctor said I **might** / ~~can't~~ need an operation if my knee doesn't improve.

1



Majeed **could** / **can't** be feeling very sick. He's playing soccer tonight.

2



I'm starting to get a lot of headaches. My sister said I **might** / **cannot** need glasses.

3



My shoulders ache. It **might not** / **could** be because I work all day at a desk.

4



Your stomach ache **could** / **might not** be serious. It might just be something you ate.

5



The reason you've got a pain in your foot **could** / **cannot** be because your shoes are too small.





43.8 READ THE EMAIL AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS



To: Julieta Fernández

Subject: re: Recovery

Hi Julieta,

It's great to hear from you. I haven't been very well recently. Last week, I was so sick that I couldn't go to work at all. At first I had a sore throat and a high temperature. I thought it could be tonsillitis. Then I got a terrible headache, and I couldn't stop vomiting. Ruby was sure I had food poisoning, but I thought it might not be that because I'd been feeling too sick to eat very much. I was afraid that it could be something really serious.

After a few days I felt a bit better, but I was still worried, so I made an appointment to see my doctor. I told her about my symptoms and she managed to reassure me. Now I know that it can't be tonsillitis because my tonsils aren't swollen, and it can't be food poisoning because I'm not vomiting any more. The doctor told me to get plenty of rest, drink lots of water, and take painkillers if I needed to. I still have a cough and a mild headache, but I'm feeling much better than I was this time last week. Want to meet for coffee once I've made a full recovery?

Hope to see you soon,

Xavier



What couldn't Xavier do last week?

Get out of bed ☐

Leave the house ☐

Go to work ☒

1 What illness did Xavier think he could have?

Tonsillitis ☐

Food poisoning ☐

A headache ☐

2 What wasn't one of Xavier's symptoms?

A high temperature ☐

Backache ☐

A sore throat ☐

3 Xavier probably didn't have food poisoning...

because he wasn't vomiting ☐

because he hadn't eaten much ☐

because he was seriously sick ☐

4 Why can't Xavier have tonsillitis?

He has had it before ☐

He doesn't have a sore throat ☐

His tonsils aren't swollen ☐

5 The doctor didn't advise Xavier to...

go back to work ☐

take painkillers ☐

drink lots of water ☐

43 CHECKLIST

⚙️ "Might" and "could" ☐

Aa Health and sickness ☐

🧩 Talking about possibility ☐