

37 Past possibility

You can use a variety of language to talk about possible events in the past, and to indicate whether you agree or disagree with speculation.

⚙️ **New language** “Might / may / could” in the past

Aa **Vocabulary** Urban myths

🧩 **New skill** Talking about past possibility

37.1 KEY LANGUAGE PAST POSSIBILITY

You can use this construction to talk about something that you think possibly happened in the past.



The copier isn't working. It **might** **may** **could** **have run** out of paper.

[He thinks it is possible that the copier has run out of paper.]

You can use this construction to talk about something that possibly did not happen in the past.



You **might not** **may not** **have plugged** it in properly.

[He thinks it is possible that the printer wasn't plugged in properly.]

“Could not” can only be used when the speaker is certain that something did not happen.



You **couldn't** **have changed** the ink properly earlier.

[He is certain that the ink wasn't changed properly.]





37.2 CROSS OUT THE INCORRECT WORDS IN EACH SENTENCE



I feel a bit sick. I **might** / ~~may not~~ / ~~could not~~ have eaten something bad.

1



It was raining, so I **could** / **might not** / **could not** have gone sunbathing even if I had wanted to.

2



Look at him! Do you think he **might** / **may not** / **could not** have won the lottery?

3



If I had left the house a little earlier, I **may** / **might not** / **could not** have missed the bus.

4



I don't know where she is. She **could** / **may not** / **could not** have gone for a run. She loves exercise.



37.3 LISTEN TO THE AUDIO AND WRITE ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS IN FULL SENTENCES



Sophie is telling her friend about an urban myth that she's heard.

What is an urban myth?

An urban myth is a modern story that isn't true, but lots of people think it is.

1 How did Sophie's opinion change about her brother's story?

2 Why were the golfers celebrating?

3 What did they do after they knocked over the kangaroo?

4 What did the kangaroo do when it woke up?

5 Why couldn't the golfers continue driving home?

37.4 KEY LANGUAGE REPORTED SPEECH

In reported speech, the main verb often changes tense to a past form. You may also need to change a time or place reference.

I **don't** believe **these** ghost stories.



He said that he **didn't** believe **those** ghost stories.

"These" is replaced by the more distant "those."



In reported open questions, the subject comes before the verb and you don't use a question form.

What are you reading?



I asked her what she was reading.



In reported closed questions (with a "yes / no" answer), you use "if" or "whether."

Are you enjoying it?



I asked her { **if** / **whether** } she was enjoying it.



37.5 REWRITE THE SENTENCES USING REPORTED SPEECH

Amal has bought a book about ghosts.

Amal said that she had bought a book about ghosts.

① Amal's reading a scary story.

Amal mentioned _____

② Amal's finished the book.

Amal told me _____

③ Are you going to the movies?

I asked her _____

④ What kind of movie are you going to see?

I asked her _____

⑤ Did you enjoy it?

I asked her _____





37.6 READ THE EMAIL AND ANSWER THE QUESTIONS

Carl went to New Zealand before Australia.

True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☒

- 1 Last week Sophie visited their father.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐
- 2 Their father had received an email from the bank.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐
- 3 The email looked genuine.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐
- 4 The police have found the email scammers.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐
- 5 Their father cannot get the money back.
True ☐ False ☐ Not given ☐



To: Carl Underwood

Subject: Update from home

Hi Carl,

Your Australian vacation photos look great. I'm just writing to keep you up to date with events while you're away. I've been looking after Dad and I went to see him last week. I'm afraid he looked quite a sorry sight. He said that he'd received an email asking for his bank details. He sent them and then someone stole money out of his account! At first sight, the email really looked like one from his bank, but it turned out to be fake. Well, I saw red and called the police and the bank immediately, and luckily they agreed to refund his money. I've told him to call me if another email like that arrives! Other than that, everything is fine here.

Keep having fun!

Sophie



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37.7 FILL IN THE GAPS USING THE IDIOMS IN THE PANEL

The detectives said they were *looking into* the case.

- 1 I was so angry that I just _____ and shouted.
- 2 The poor dog had been left in the cold and was a very _____.
- 3 The watch looked genuine _____, but it wasn't.
- 4 I'll just have to _____ about my English test results.

at first sight

saw red

looking into

sorry sight

wait and see



37 CHECKLIST



"Might / may / could" in the past ☐

Aa Urban myths ☐



Talking about past possibility ☐