

What is Modality: Probability and Certainty?

Worksheet

Probability modality uses verbs like 'must' (certain), 'should' (likely), 'might' (possible), 'could' (possible), and 'may' (possible) to express degrees of certainty. Each modal indicates a different level of likelihood from high certainty to low possibility.

Questions

1. Which modal expresses highest certainty?
A) might
B) should
C) must
D) could
2. 'She should be at the office by now.' What does 'should' mean?
A) It is certain
B) It is likely based on expectation
C) It is possible
D) It is unlikely
3. Probability spectrum from high to low:
A) must, might, should
B) might, must, should
C) must, should, might
D) should, could, must
4. 'He could be sleeping.' This expresses:
A) certainty
B) probability
C) obligation
D) permission
5. She must be at home; her car is in the driveway.
6. He might call tomorrow.
7. They could have missed the flight.
8. Define: Which modal expresses highest certainty?
9. Define: Probability order: highest to lowest?
10. Define: What does 'might' express?

Answer Key

1. C) must — 'Must' = highest certainty based on evidence or logic.
2. B) It is likely based on expectation — 'Should' indicates expected likelihood but not certainty.
3. C) must, should, might — 'Must' (highest) > 'should' (likely) > 'might'/'could' (possible).
4. B) probability — 'Could' expresses possibility—something may be true but is not confirmed.
5. 'Must' expresses logical certainty—based on evidence, the speaker is very sure she is home. This is the highest level of probability.
6. 'Might' expresses low probability or possibility—the speaker is uncertain whether he will call. It is less likely than 'should.'
7. 'Could' expresses possibility—it is possible they missed the flight, but it is not confirmed. The speaker is uncertain.
8. 'Must'—it indicates the speaker is almost certain based on logic or evidence.
9. 'Must' (certain) > 'should' (likely) > 'might'/'could'/'may' (possible).
10. Lower probability—something is possible but not likely.

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