

Grammar Review - Talking about probability or chance

Decide which of the following sentences describe the probability of something happening.

- Tom must be in his office, the light is on.
- Sheila must get up early to catch the train.
- This may be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.
- You may use our parking space while we are away.
- I could swim when I was 6.
- His story could be true, but I wouldn't bet on it.
- These forms should be filled in asap.
- The President should be re-elected – a lot of people support him.
- It must have been hard starting college at the age of 50.
- You must have an ID on you if you want to buy alcoholic drinks in Germany.

Number the sentences expressing probability starting from 1 - very likely (probable) to 4 - the least likely.

What do the same modals in the other sentences express?

REMEMBER

Some modals (must, should, may, might, could) can be used to talk about probability and chance. Be careful because the same modals may also be used to talk about other things such as ability (be able to do something), obligation (have to do something) or permission (be allowed to do something).

ANSWERS

1. Tom must be in his office. / It must have been hard starting college at the age of 50.
2. The President should be re-elected.
3. This may be the beginning of a beautiful friendship.
4. His story could be true, but I wouldn't bet on it.

obligation – Sheila must get up early. / These forms should be filled in asap / You must have an ID on you if you want to buy alcoholic drinks in Germany.

permission - You may use our parking space.

ability - I could swim when I was 6.