

Unit 28

Must (have) and can't (have)

a Study this example situation:

Alf is a very good tennis player and not many players beat him. But yesterday he played against Bill and Bill won. So:

Bill **must be** a very good player (otherwise he wouldn't have won).

We use **must** to say we are sure that something is true:

- You've been traveling all day. You **must be** tired. (= I am sure that you are tired.)
- I hear that your examinations are next week. You **must be studying** very hard at the moment. (= I am sure that you are studying.)
- Carol knows a lot about films. She **must go** to the cinema a lot. (= I am sure she goes to the cinema a lot.)

We use **can't** to say that we think something is impossible:

- You've only just had dinner. You **can't be** hungry already. (= It is impossible that you are hungry.)
- Tom said that he would be here ten minutes ago and he is never late. He **can't be coming**.

Study the structure:

I/you/he (etc.)		must		be tired/hungry etc.
		can't		be studying/waiting/coming etc.
				go/do/play etc.

b For the past we use **must have** (done) and **can't have** (done). Study this example:

We went to Roy's house last night and rang the doorbell. There was no answer.

He **must have gone** out (otherwise he would have answered).

- The phone rang but I didn't hear it. I **must have been** asleep.
- I made a lot of noise when I came home. You **must have heard** me.
- She passed me in the street without speaking. She **can't have seen** me.
- Tom walked straight into the wall. He **can't have been looking** where he was going.

Study the structure:

I/you/he (etc.)		must		have		been asleep/tired etc.
		can't				been looking/waiting etc.
						gone/done/seen/heard etc.

'**Couldn't** have (done)' is possible instead of '**can't** have (done)':

- She **couldn't have seen** me.
- He **couldn't have been looking** where he was going.

For other meanings of **must** and **can't** see **Units 26, 31 and 32**.