

Unit 29

May (have) and might (have)

a Study this example situation:

You are looking for Jack. Nobody knows for sure where he is but you get some suggestions:

He **may be** in his office. (= perhaps he is in his office)

He **might be having** lunch. (= perhaps he is having lunch)

Ask Ann. She **might know**. (= perhaps Ann knows)

We use **may** and **might** to say that something is possible. There is no important difference between **may** and **might**. You can say:

- He **may be** in his office. *or* He **might be** in his office.

The negative is **may not** and **might not** (or **mightn't**):

- Jack **might not be** in his office. (= perhaps he isn't in his office)
- I'm not sure whether I can lend you any money. I **may not have** enough.
(= perhaps I don't have enough)

Study the structure:

I/you/he (etc.)		may might		(not)		be in his office be having/waiting etc. know/have/do etc.
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b To say what was possible in the past, we use **may have (done)** and **might have (done)**:

- A: I wonder why Ann didn't answer the doorbell.
B: Well, I suppose she **may have been** in the bath. (= perhaps she *was* in the bath)
- A: Why didn't he say hello when he passed us in the street?
B: He **might have been day-dreaming**. (= perhaps he *was* day-dreaming)
- A: I can't find my bag anywhere.
B: You **might have left** it in the shop. (= perhaps you *left* it)
- A: I wonder why Ann didn't come to the meeting.
B: She **might not have known** about it. (= perhaps she *didn't know*)

Study the structure :

I/you/he (etc.)		may might		(not) have		been in the bath been day-dreaming/waiting etc. known/left/had etc.
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c You can use **could** instead of **may** or **might**. But with **could** the possibility is smaller:

- 'Where's Jack?' 'I'm not sure. He **could be** in his office, I suppose, but he's not usually there at this time.'

For **may** and **might** see also **Units 30** and **31**.

b To say what was possible in the past, we use **may have (done)** and **might**