



**Remember to watch the video first!** Then read the conversation between Sophie and Nur, an English language student that Sophie met when she was travelling in Indonesia.



**Grammar  
Snacks**

We use the modal verbs *might*, *may* and *could* + an infinitive form without *to* when we think it is possible that something is true. We use *must* when we are sure it is true and *can't* when we are sure it isn't true.



**Nur**

So, we can use *might*, *may* and *could* for making guesses?

Yes. They're all used when we are not sure about something, but we think that it is possible that it is true.

*They **might be** some kind of small pig.*

But could I also say, '*They **could be** a kind of pig*' or '*They **may be** a kind of pig*'?

Yes, you could. The meanings are really similar. You can choose whether to use *may*, *might* or *could*.

Ah, OK. So if I'm *not sure* about something I can use *may*, *might* or *could* and the meaning is almost the same. That's easy to remember.

Yes, that's right. But there's something else which affects the meaning, and that's *how* you say it; the 'intonation'. If you stress *may*, *might* or *could* it sounds less probable.

*It **could** be mango juice.* (less likely)

*It **could** be mango juice.* (more likely)

OK, and if I'm *sure* about something, what modals do I use?

We use *must* if we think something is true and *can't* if we think something isn't true.


*So, it **must** come from an animal.*

*That looks like tomato juice, but it **can't** be, that would be too easy.*



**Sophie**





Do the verb forms change in the third person?


No, they don't change. They are the same in the first, second and third person.

Great! I think I like these *modals*!

You're right. Once you know the rules, they're pretty easy. Don't forget they are always followed by the infinitive form without *to*. We also use *may/might + be + -ing* for something happening right now or a possible future arrangement.

*That **might be** Mum **phoning** from Bali.*


*She **might be going** to Australia.*



You also used '*it **could be** a kind of pig*' for describing something in the present.

Yes, but that was with the verb *to be*, a stative verb. We use the *-ing* form with active or dynamic verbs.

I see. Is there anything else to be careful about?



Yes, if you are talking about possibility in the past you need the modal + *have* + past participle.

*She **might have taken** those photos in China.*

*I **may have thrown** it away by mistake.*

Hmm. I think I *may* need to practise these verbs a bit.

Yes, you *might* be right!

Watch the video on our website!

