

# Using may, might, can and could

Can, may and might

Can is mainly used to talk about theoretical possibility. We do not normally use can in affirmative clauses to talk about the chances that something will actually happen. To express this meaning, we use may/might/could.

Compare:

There may be a strike next week. (= It is possible that there will be a strike next week.)

She may come. (= It is possible that she will come.)

Vijay may win the first prize. (= It is possible that Vijay will win the first prize.)

It may rain in the evening. (= It is possible that it will rain in the evening.)

Strikes can happen any time. (= It is possible for strikes to happen any time.)

Glass can be blown. (= It is possible to blow glass.)

I may join the club next week. (= It is possible that I will join the club next week.)

Anybody can join the club. (= It is possible for anyone to join the club.)

I may go to London next week. (= It is possible that I will go to London next week.)

One can travel to London by ship or by air. (= It is possible for one to travel to London by ship or by air.)

## May / might + have + past participle

The structure may/might + have + past participle is used to say that it is possible that something happened.

Gauri hasn't come yet. She may have missed the train. (= It is possible that she missed the train.)

It is 6 o'clock. Gautam may have reached home. (= It is possible that Gautam has reached home.)

The same structure can be used to say that something was possible but did not happen.

If she hadn't been so bad-tempered, I might have married her.