

English Grammar in Use (Intermediate Level)

Unit

28

must and can't

➤ Study this example:

My house is very near the motorway.



It **must be** very noisy.



We use **must** to say that we believe something is certain:

- ☐ You've been travelling all day. You **must be** tired.
(travelling is tiring and you've been travelling all day, so you **must** be tired)
- ☐ 'Joe is a hard worker.' 'Joe? You **must be joking**. He doesn't do anything.'
- ☐ Louise **must get** very bored in her job. She does the same thing every day.

We use **can't** to say that we believe something is not possible:

- ☐ You've just had lunch. You **can't be** hungry already.
(we don't expect people to be hungry immediately after a meal)
- ☐ They haven't lived here for very long. They **can't know** many people.

The structure is:

you/she/they (etc.)	must can't	be (tired / hungry / at work etc.) be -ing (doing / going / joking etc.) get / know / have etc.
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There's nobody at home. They **must have gone** out.



Martin and Lucy expected their friends to be at home.

They rang the doorbell twice, but nobody has answered. Lucy says:

They **must have gone** out.
(= there is no other possibility)

For the past we use **must have ...** and **can't have ...** :

- ☐ I lost one of my gloves. I **must have dropped** it somewhere.
(that's the only explanation I can think of)
- ☐ 'We used to live very near the motorway.' 'Did you? It **must have been** noisy.'
- ☐ Sarah hasn't contacted me. She **can't have got** my message.
- ☐ Max walked into a wall. He **can't have been looking** where he was going.

The structure is:

I/you/he (etc.)	must can't	have	been (asleep / at work etc.) been -ing (doing / looking etc.) gone / got / known etc.
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You can use **couldn't have** instead of **can't have**:

- ☐ Sarah **couldn't have got** my message.
- ☐ Max **couldn't have been looking** where he was going.