Modal auxiliary verbs + 'have'

Introduction

We **should have** turned left, not right - now we're lost.

Definition

This is a structure which is used with **modal auxiliary verbs** and with verbs which have a similar function to talk about the past, present or future. For more information on these, see **Introduction to modal verbs** and the following:

Can	**Could**	**Should**	**Ought to**	**Might and may**	**Will**
Shall	**Would**	**Must**	**Have to**	**To need / need**	

Construction

Affirmative: subject + modal + 'have' + past participle
  I **should have** gone.

Negative: subject + modal + 'not' + 'have' + past participle
  I **shouldn't have** gone.

Interrogative: modal + subject + 'have' + past participle
  Should I **have** gone?

Note that this construction is not possible for all the verbs listed above or all the uses below. In particular:

1.   In the affirmative, **can have** and **need have** are only used with restricting words - see below.

2. **may not have** is not contracted.

3. **may have** is not used in the interrogative.

4. **must have** is only used in the affirmative.

5. **ought to have**, **have to have** and **to need to have** are constructed as follows:

	Ought to have	Have to have	To need to have
Affirmative	subject + 'ought to' + 'have' + past participle	subject + 'have to' + 'have' + past participle	subject + 'need to' + 'have' + past participle
	I **ought to** have done it.	He **has to** have done it.	He **needs** to have done it.
Negative	subject + 'ought not to' + 'have' + past participle		subject + 'do not' +'need to' + 'have' + past participle
	I **oughtn't to** have done it.		He **doesn't need** to have done it.
Interrogative	'ought' + subject + 'to have' + past participle		'do' + subject 'need to' +'have' + past participle
	Ought I **to have** done it?		**Does** he **need** to have done it?

Uses

This structure can be used in some of the same ways as standard **modal auxiliary verbs** in past, present and future contexts.

The main uses are listed below.

Modal	Use	Examples

Can have	Possibility [interrogative only]	How **can** you **have forgotten** again? I reminded you this morning!
	Deduction [rare in the affirmative form - only with words such as 'only', 'hardly' and 'never'.]	I **can** only **have been** at the meeting for an hour but it felt like three - it was so boring. You **can't have been** cold - it was 30˚ and you were wearing a coat. It **can't have been** easy with four young children and a full-time job - how did you manage?

Could have	Possibility in the past, present or future	"Where was Lionel this morning - I couldn't find him?" "I'm not sure. He **could have been** in a meeting room."
		I **could have** gone to the US to work but I took a job in London instead.
		Thanks for your help last week - I **couldn't have done** it without you.
		He **could have been** a doctor now but he left university to travel round the world.
		I **couldn't have** worked today (if you'd asked me); I have an important appointment.
	The possibility of things that didn't happen	"What shall we do tomorrow?" "Well, we **could have** gone cycling with everyone else - the weather forecast is great. But I still haven't fixed my bike so let's go for a walk instead." [It would have been possible if I'd fixed my bike.]
		You **could have** started a fire when you left that cigarette there - you really should be more careful.
	Speculation about the past	"Why isn't Antoinette here yet?" "I don't know but she **could have** decided to go to lunch with the client she was visiting this morning."
	Unrealistic situations	We had a great time in Italy; I **could have** stayed there forever.
		I **couldn't have** worked for your last boss - he was far too demanding.
	With 'I wish'	I wish we **could have** had a meeting last week; the problem is just getting worse.
	As 'would be able to' in conditional sentences	If you'd asked me, I **could have** helped you.
	Reproach	You **could have** reminded me about the meeting! I was 10 minutes late.

Should have	**Advice in retrospect**	You **should have** gone by train.
		You **shouldn't have** married him.
	The best or right thing to have done in the past - maybe some regret	We **should have** discussed this with the client before making a decision.
		Should I **have** ordered some more of these?
		I **shouldn't have** shouted at you earlier - I'm really sorry.
	Expectation	She worked hard and she **should have** passed her exam - I don't know why she didn't.
		It **should have** been delivered yesterday - I'm not happy with their service.
	Deduction	He **should have** finished lunch by now - I'll try calling him again.
		Don't worry. It's not too late to change the order - they **shouldn't have** dispatched it yet.
	Regret in the present	I **should have been** at home now but I'm still stuck at work.
		"Do you think the food here will be OK?" "Mmm, I **should have** thought so. Let's try it."
	Opinion - more tentative than 'think'	I **shouldn't have** thought it would rain today.
Ought to have [rare in negative and interrogative]	**Advice in retrospect [less common than should have]**	You **ought to have** gone by train.
	The best or right thing to do	He **ought to have** worn a helmet.
	Expectation	They **ought to have** arrived by now.

Might/may have	Possibility in the past [**may have** is not possible in the interrogative]	The report **may have** been on the printer - I forgot to look there. Susan wasn't in her office but she **might have** been in the canteen.
	Reproach	You **might have** helped me but you just stood there watching!
	To highlight a contrast between positive and negative	She **might**/**may not have** been punctual but she was very efficient. [=Although she wasn't punctual, she was very efficient.] She **might**/**may have** been punctual but she wasn't very efficient.
Will have	Deduction	"Who was Chantal talking to on the phone?" "It'**ll have** been her boyfriend. He calls her every afternoon." She'**ll have** finished by now.
	Future actions and states	See **future perfect**.
Shall have	Future actions and states	See **future perfect**.
Would have	Opinion	I **wouldn't have** thought you'd like Japanese food - that surprises me.
	Conditionals	I'**d have** helped you if you'd asked. I **wouldn't have** been as successful now if I hadn't worked so hard.
	Wishing	I'**d have** loved to live in the countryside when I was young but I grew up in the city.
	Hypothetical situations	The traffic was terrible this morning - it **would have** been quicker to walk.
	Deduction in the past, especially when based on historical evidence	In the last century, more people **would have** lived in this region than now.

Must have	Deduction	"Who was Chantal talking to on the phone?" "It **must have** been her boyfriend. He calls her every afternoon."
Have to have	Necessity [see **future perfect** and note below] Deduction	We **have to have** finished this by tomorrow. "Who was Chantal talking to on the phone?" "It **has to have** been her boyfriend. He calls her every afternoon."
To need	Necessity [see **future perfect** and note below]	I **need** to **have** finished this by tomorrow. To reach our targets, we **don't need to have** sold as many cars by the end of this month as last month. **Do** we **need to have** sent the invitations by Thursday or Friday?
Need	Necessity [rare in the affirmative - only with words such as 'only', 'hardly' and 'never'.]	I **need** only **have** stayed for an extra ten minutes but I decided not to. They **needn't have** spent so much money - what a waste! **Need** we **have** booked the biggest meeting room? We're only expecting three people.

'Could have' or 'may/might have'

These are both used to talk about possibility but in different ways.

They **could have** played golf yesterday.	= all the right conditions existed but they didn't play.
They **might/might not have** played golf yesterday.	= we don't know if they played or not.
They **couldn't have** played golf yesterday.	= something prevented them and they didn't play.

Present continuous

Some of these can be followed by the present continuous for some uses. For example:

1. Possibility

> He **could have** been having lunch.
> He **couldn't have** been having lunch.
> I **could have** been relaxing at home now but I'm still at work.
> He **might/may have** been having lunch.

2. Deduction

> He **can't have** been having lunch - the canteen was closed.
> He **should have** been having lunch.
> He **must have** been having lunch.
> He'**ll have** been having lunch.
> He **has to** have been having lunch.

3. Reproach

> You **could have** been helping me instead of watching TV.

4. Regret

> I **should have** been relaxing at home now but I'm still at work.

5. Advice

> You **should have** been learning Japanese, not English.
> You **ought to have** been learning Japanese, not English.

6. The best or right thing

> We **should have** been spending less money on new computers.
> We **ought to have** been spending less money on new computers.

7. Expectation

> They **should have** been working on the installation yesterday.
> They **ought to have** been working on the installation yesterday.

8. Deduction

> "I called Kerry but she didn't answer."
> "She'**d have** been having lunch, I expect."

'To need' and 'need'

Note the following different meanings:

I **needn't have** bought so much cheese. [I bought some but when I got home, I discovered I already had a lot in the fridge - I didn't know it was there.]

I went shopping but I **didn't need** to buy chocolate because I already had some. [I didn't buy any because I knew I had some.]

The future perfect

Note that this structure has the same construction as the **future perfect simple**.

We'**ll have** finished this by Friday.

As well as 'will' and 'shall', we can use some modal verbs for this tense.

We **might** have finished this by Friday. [possibility]
We **should** have finished this by Friday. [expectation]
We **ought to** have finished this by Friday. [expectation]
We **need to** have finished this by Friday. [necessity]
We **have to** have finished this by Friday. [necessity/obligation]

Examples

He **can never have** had dance lessons!

"I've postponed next week's meeting because I haven't had time to prepare for it." "Well, we **couldn't have** had it next week anyway because too many of us will be on holiday."   "Oh yes, I forgot about that."

My train **ought to have** been here by now but there was a delay, so I'll be late - sorry. I **should have** driven instead.

I miss working at the bank. It **might not have** been the most exciting job but I had great colleagues.

I'm sorry Akira isn't here yet - he'**ll have** been held up in the rush hour traffic.

"It's not bad but I'**d have** done this part differently."   "OK, I'll change it."

It **must have** been raining.

"What do you think? Remember we **have to have** decided this before we meet them again."

He **needn't have** worried - of course she said yes.

Some common expressions

Expression	Meaning	Example
'may well have' + past participle	Someone probably did something but doesn't remember.	"You said you wouldn't be here tonight." "I may well have said that but here I am anyway!"
'could have' + 'sworn'	To have been sure about something.	I can't find my keys. I could've sworn I left them on my desk but they're not there.
'You should have' + past participle	'I wish you had...' There's a suggestion that someone has missed something good.	You should have seen her reaction when I told her the news!
'Who'd have thought it?'	Expresses great surprise.	"Tom asked Liz to marry him." "I know - who'd have thought it!"
'It could have been worse.'	'We shouldn't worry - it wasn't too bad.'	"There was a train strike last week and half the team couldn't get to work." "Oh well, it could have been worse - this isn't our busiest month."
'might have known'	Expresses a lack of surprise.	"Who ate the last cake?" "It was Lucie." "Ah...I might have known it!"