

May and might

How to use May and Might in English ?

May and might are modal verbs. *Might* is the preterite of *may* and their use can be classified into two categories:

To express permission

We may use to ask politely:

- [May I ask you a question?](#)

One can also use may to grant permission:

- [You may stay up late this evening.](#)

May can also be used to formulate a prohibition:

- [You may not smoke here.](#)

Might only express a permission in reported speech with a subordinate:

- [I asked her if I might borrow her car.](#)

May is only used in the present context. The equivalent in past and future contexts is **be allowed to** (to be authorized to, to have the right to...)

- [She wasn't allowed to drink sodas.](#)
- [I hope that I'll be allowed to watch TV tonight.](#)

To express the hypothesis

We also use **may** to suggest a probability, an uncertainty or a possibility, when we are not sure of something:

- [She may be jealous.](#)
- [You may be right but I'll have to check.](#)

With **might**, the speaker expresses a greater uncertainty than with **may**:

- [He might not live here.](#)
- [It might not rain today.](#)

⚠ Do not confuse *might + verb* and *might + be v-ing*:

- [He might play soccer. \(in general\)](#)
- [He might be playing soccer. \(right now\)](#)

⚠ Do not confuse *can* and *may*:

- [This watch can be damaged by misuse. → This watch may be damaged if it is not used properly.](#)
- [This watch may be damaged by misuse. → This watch may be damaged due to misuse.](#)