

**COULD / COULD HAVE**

**= POSSIBLE, BUT IT  
DIDN'T HAPPEN**

**COULDN'T / COULDN'T HAVE**

**= IMPOSSIBLE**

***(COULDA)***

***(COULDN'TA)***

### Possibility / Impossibility in the Past

**could have** = possible, but didn't do it

I *could have* worked overtime. (but I didn't)

She *could have* helped me. (but she didn't)

**couldn't have** = impossible

A: I saw your sister at the library.

B: You *couldn't have* seen her. She was home all day.

A: I moved that piano by myself.

B: You *couldn't have* moved it. It's too heavy.

#### Exercise 1

Directions:

Ron and Gloria are talking about a different direction their lives could have taken. They are discussing what they did and what they could have done instead. Fill in the blanks for each sentence.

1. We got married at home, but we \_\_\_\_\_ in a church.
2. We spent our honeymoon in San Francisco, but we \_\_\_\_\_ it at Disneyland.
3. We bought a house, but we \_\_\_\_\_ a condo.
4. We bought our house in the city, but we \_\_\_\_\_ one in the suburbs.
5. We \_\_\_\_\_ children, but we decided not to have any.
6. I (Gloria) \_\_\_\_\_ a housewife, but I decided to have a career.

## Exercise 2

Each of the following sentences is impossible. Why? Use *couldn't have* in your response.

1. The Pope (leader of the Catholic Church) gave his wife flowers for her birthday.
2. President Kennedy ran for reelection in 1964.
3. We had an English test on December 25th.
4. Elvis Presley made a hit record in 1980.
5. It snowed lay May in Seattle.
6. Last Sunday, I got a letter from my mother.
7. I took the ferry from Seattle to Edmonds Community College.
8. Your teacher did his/her elementary school homework on computer.