

Making guesses

1 Reading

Read the letter and with a partner answer the questions below.

Dear Jennifer

It was so nice to get your letter yesterday. We all really enjoy reading your letters, especially Grandma. I'm glad to hear that everything is going well and you are enjoying the course. I hope you are not feeling homesick - I'm sure you'll get used to being away soon. How are you finding the food? Dad is worried that you are only eating hot dogs and hamburgers but I told him that you can probably get all kinds of different food there.

I suppose it must be very strange living in such a large city - very different from home. I don't think I could bear all the noise but you are young and it must be exciting for you. You didn't say anything about Mr and Mrs Greenbaum or the house. Are you the only one staying there? Mrs Greenbaum sounded very nice on the phone when I called you last week. Do tell us more about them when you write again.

Have you made many new friends yet? You mentioned Peter in your letter. He sounds very nice. Dad and I are both looking forward to meeting him and Grandma is already thinking of knitting baby clothes! I told her you were a bit young for that!

Well, darling, that's about it for now. Remember, you can call us any time. Just reverse the charges if you need to, but remember the time difference! We're all looking forward to seeing you at Christmas. Dad and Grandma both send their love.

Lots of Love

Making guesses

2 Questions

For each question choose one of the following with your partner

- you are very sure this is true
- you are very sure this is untrue - it isn't possible
- it's just a possibility but you have no strong idea

- 1 The writer is Jennifer's mother.
- 2 The writer is Jennifer's sister.
- 3 Jennifer's first language is English.
- 4 Jennifer is working in a foreign country.
- 5 Jennifer is studying away from home.
- 6 Jennifer is studying in a small village in China.
- 7 Jennifer is studying in America.
- 8 Mrs Greenbaum is one of Jennifer's classmates.
- 9 Mrs Greenbaum is Jennifer's landlady.
- 10 Peter is a friend of Jennifer's.
- 11 Peter is Jennifer's boyfriend.
- 12 Jennifer is coming home for Christmas.

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12 Jennifer is coming home for Christmas.

Answers

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| 1 | The writer must be Jennifer's mother. | This is a very strong possibility |
| 2 | The writer could / may / might be Jennifer's sister. | We must also consider this possibility, although it is less likely |
| 3 | Jennifer's first language must be English. | This is a very strong possibility |
| 4 | Jennifer could / may / might be working in a foreign country. | This is possible |
| 5 | Jennifer must be studying away from home. | This is a very strong possibility |
| 6 | Jennifer can't be studying in a small village in China. | This isn't possible |
| 7 | Jennifer could / may / might be studying in America. | This is possible |
| 8 | Mrs Greenbaum could / may / might be one of Jennifer's classmates. | We must consider this possibility, although it is less likely |
| 9 | Mrs Greenbaum must be Jennifer's landlady. | This is a very strong possibility |
| 10 | Peter must be a friend of Jennifer's. | This is a very strong possibility |
| 11 | Peter could / may / might / must be Jennifer's boyfriend. | This depends on how you interpret the evidence. It's certainly a possibility. |
| 12 | Jennifer could / may / might be coming home for Christmas. | This is a possibility, although it is also possible that Jennifer's parents are going to visit Jennifer |

Other ways of making guesses

In examples, 2, 8, 11, and 12, the possibility is somewhere between 'must' and 'may/might/could' or between 'can't' and 'may/might/could'. In these cases we can use the adverb 'probably / probably not'.

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| The writer probably isn't Jennifer's sister. | It is much more likely that she's Jennifer's mother |
| Mrs Greenbaum probably isn't one of Jennifer's classmates. | It is very likely she's Jennifer's landlady. There's a small possibility that she is also studying in Jennifer's class. |
| Peter is probably Jennifer's boyfriend. | This is very likely, although he could be a very good friend and Jennifer's grandmother could be very keen for Jennifer to get married. |
| Jennifer is probably coming home for Christmas. | It's more likely that Jennifer would go home for Christmas when you consider that Christmas is a family occasion in many parts of the world. |