Can and could for ability



Can and **could** are modal verbs. We use them to talk about possibility, ability and permission. We use **can** and **can't** to talk about our present abilities.

Subject	*can / can't*	Base form
I / he / she / it / we / you / they	**can** **can't**	swim 1000 metres. dance.

Can	Subject	Base form
Can	I / we / she / it / we / you / they	swim 1000 metres? dance?

We use **could** and **couldn't** to talk about our abilities in the past. We often use a past time phrase.

Subject	*could / couldn't*	Base form	Past time phrase
I / he / she / it / we / you / they	**could** **couldn't**	swim	when I was eight. when she was three. this morning. yesterday. in 2006.

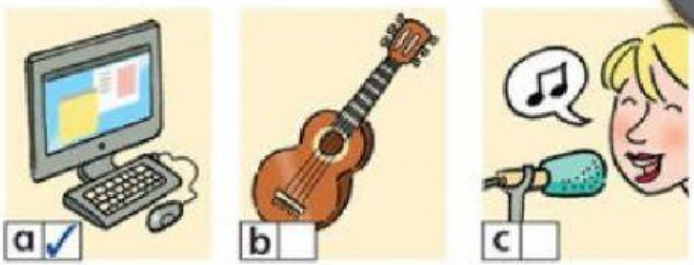
We often use **can** and **could** for ability to talk about our senses.

*I **can smell** smoke.* *I **can't taste** it.*
*Can you **hear** me?* *I **couldn't see** it.*

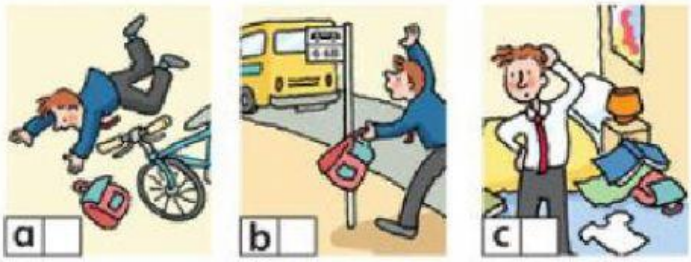
LIVEWORKSHEETS

14.1 Listen and tick ✓ the correct picture.

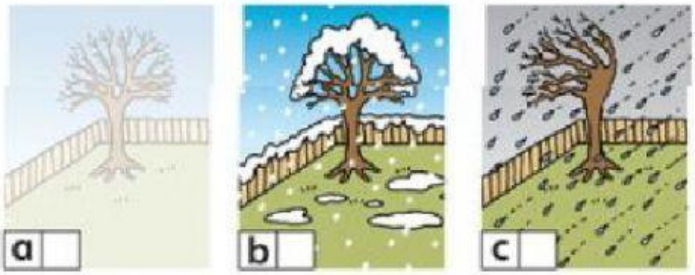
▶ What can Sarah do?



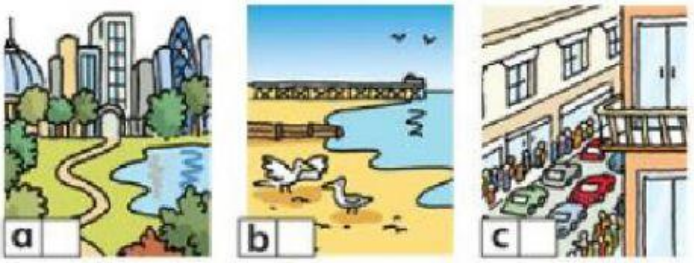
1 Why is Max late?



2 What was the weather like this morning?



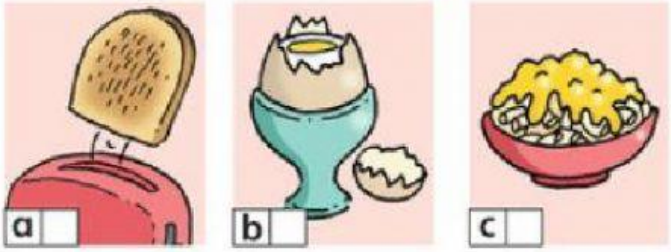
3 Where's Sarah?



4 How far can Emily's dad run?



5 What can Edward cook?



LIVEWORKSHEETS

Complete the conversations with *can*, *can't*, *could* or *couldn't*. Then act the conversations in pairs.

▶ How far can _____ you run?
About two kilometres.

1 _____ you dance?
No, but I _____ when I was young.

2 How did you know there was a fire?
I _____ see lots of smoke.

3 Does Leo know how to cook?
No, he _____ even make a sandwich!

4 Did you ride your bike yesterday?
No, I didn't. It was broken and I _____ fix it.

5 What's that noise?
What noise? I _____ hear anything.

6 Does Libby like playing the piano?
Yes, she loves it. She _____ play some songs when she was three.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Can and could for permission



We use **can** and **can't** to give and refuse permission.

You	**can**	go ...
	can't	have ...





We use **can** and **could** to ask for permission. **Could** is more formal than **can**.

Can	I	have ...?
Could	we	go ...?

***6 Complete the sentences with *can* or *can't*.**



▶ You *can't* use your phone here.



1 You _____ listen to music here.



2 You _____ take photos here.



3 You _____ play ball games here.

Tick ✓ the correct answer.

▶ Can I ___ it now?
a ☐ to eat b ☑ eat

1 No, you ___ use your mobile phone in class.
a ☐ can b ☐ can't

2 ___ say something, please?
a ☐ I could b ☐ Could I

3 Yes, you ___ go to the party.
a ☐ can b ☐ could

4 I'm sorry. You ___ play football here.
a ☐ can't b ☐ couldn't

5 Excuse me, Mrs Bond, ___ I photocopy this?
a ☐ could b ☐ can't

6 Could I take this book home, please?
a ☐ I'm sorry but you couldn't.
b ☐ I'm sorry but you can't.

LIVEWORKSHEETS