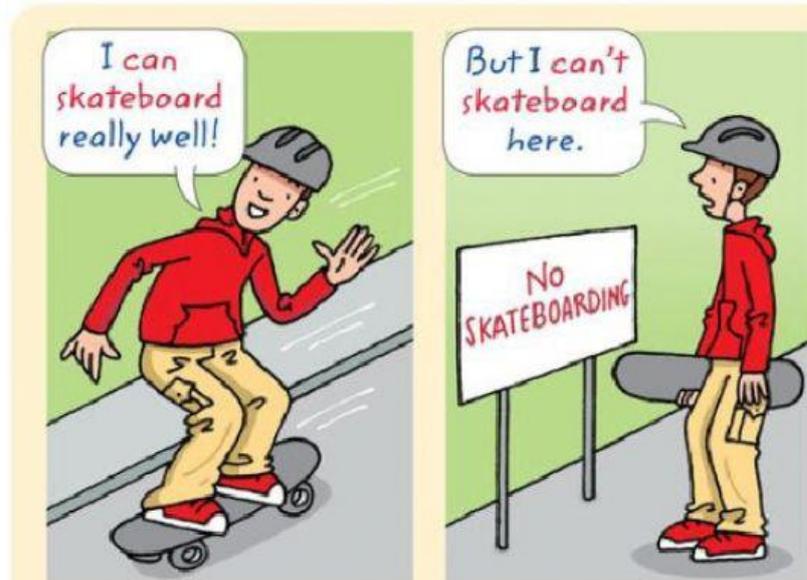


## Can and could for ability



**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.

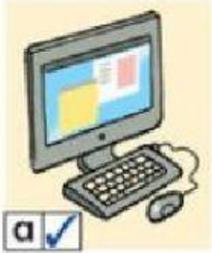
Subject	could / couldn't	Base form	Past time phrase
I / he / she / it / we / you / they	could couldn't	swim	when I was eight. when she was three. this morning. yesterday. in 2006.

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.*

14.1 Listen and tick ✓ the correct picture.

▶ What can Sarah do?



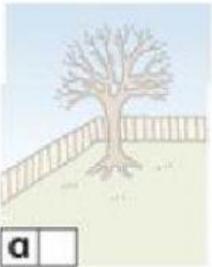
1 Why is Max late?



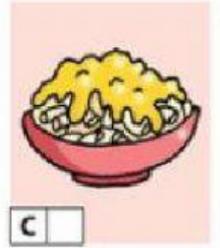
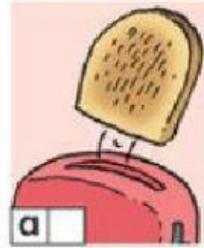
4 How far can Emily's dad run?



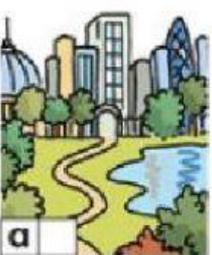
2 What was the weather like this morning?



5 What can Edward cook?



3 Where's Sarah?





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.

## 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.