

GRAMMAR Modal verbs for ability

Present

She *can/can't* paint.

They're *able to/aren't able to* read quickly.

Past

I *could/couldn't* follow the plot.

Jack *was/wasn't able to* go to the library.

He *managed/didn't manage to* read the book in a day.

Future

I'll *be/won't be able to* finish this today.

Questions

Can/Could he paint? No, he *can't/couldn't*.

Is/Was she *able to* read quickly? Yes, she *is/was*.

Will you be able to read more books? No, I *won't*.

Did he manage to finish the book? Yes, he *did*.

Use

We use *could* to describe general ability in the past.

We use *managed to* to describe specific achievements in the past.

1 ● Match the sentence halves.

- 1 ☒ I couldn't
- 2 ☐ Sheila can
- 3 ☐ Unfortunately, Keith won't
- 4 ☐ Will you be able
- 5 ☐ We can't
- 6 ☐ I managed
- a read in five languages!
- b offer you a place at our college, I'm afraid.
- c understand the French film—they all spoke very fast.
- d to find the book you wanted.
- e to finish the book this week?
- f be able to come to the party.

2 ● Choose the correct option.

- 1 Were / Did you able to ride a bike when you were five?
- 2 Ben and Eve won't *be able* / *able* to come to the play.
- 3 Can you *write* / *to write* poetry?
- 4 I managed *to read* / *reading* fifteen books over the summer!
- 5 The theatre was so full of people that I *couldn't* / *could* see the stage.
- 6 I started writing a novel, but I didn't *manage* / *manage to* finish it.

3 ●● Choose the word or phrase which does NOT fit each sentence.

- 1 ____ to speak to your mum last night?
a Did you manage b Were you able
c Could you
- 2 I ____ post that package for you – sorry.
a can't b managed to
c won't be able to
- 3 I ____ read when I was three, but only slowly.
a can b could
c was able to
- 4 I ____ drive, but I'm taking lessons.
a can't b 'm not able to
c managed to
- 5 The book was difficult to follow, but I ____ finish it.
a couldn't b was able to
c managed to

4 ●●● Complete the text with one word in each gap.

Thank you, Ms Palmer!

When I was younger, I wasn't very good at anything. I couldn't swim, I wasn't ¹*able* to read very well and I ²____n't ride a bike on my own until I was twelve! People used to ask me things like, 'Can you say "thank you" in French?' and I just looked down and felt embarrassed. The problem was I just didn't have any confidence. I ⁴____able to do these things if I really tried, but I didn't believe I could.

Then a new French teacher came to our school. Her name was Ms Palmer and she gave me lots of attention. She really encouraged me and said things like, 'If you ⁵____to read this text, I'll let you play that French game on your tablet for ten minutes.' It worked, and not only did my French improve, but now I ⁶____able to do lots of other things and I feel more confident too. Next year, I'm hoping I will ⁷____able to learn Spanish and Italian too. Merci beaucoup, Ms Palmer!

GRAMMAR

Modal verbs for obligation and prohibition

Obligation

You *must/have to* read. Do/Did/Will you *have to* read?
 They *had to* read. Yes, I *do/did/will*.
 I *will have to* read.

Lack of obligation

You *don't have to* come. She *didn't have to* come.
 He *won't have to* come.

Prohibition

You *can't* go.
 You *mustn't/aren't allowed to* go.
 I *wasn't allowed to* go.
 He *won't be allowed to* go.
 Are/Were you *allowed to* stay late?
 Will you *be allowed to* stay late?

Must and *mustn't* don't have past or future forms. We use *had to* or *will have to* instead. In question forms, we usually use *have to*.

- 1 ● Decide if the meanings of the sentences are similar (S) or different (D).

- You must do your homework tonight.
 You have to do your homework tonight. ☒ S
- Jake had to wear a shirt.
 Jake was allowed to wear a shirt. ☐
- It's important that they don't leave any litter.
 They *mustn't* leave any litter. ☐
- We won't have to pay for it.
 It won't be necessary for us to pay for it. ☐

- 2 ●● Complete the text with the words below.

allowed aren't don't must mustn't

There's an unusual exhibition on at the art gallery in town. You ¹ *don't* have to pay anything, but you can if you want to. The exhibition is interesting because you are ² _____ to touch the pieces in the gallery. You can pick them up, throw them around, even break them! But you ³ _____ allowed to say bad things about them. At the end you can even write your opinion of the exhibition in a little book, but of course it ⁴ _____ be something positive. And you ⁵ _____ write more than three words. It's quite weird, but interesting, I think.

- 3 ●●● Complete the second sentence with the word in bold so that it means the same as the first one. Use no more than five words.

- I'll have to go to bed early tonight. **ALLOWED**
 I *won't be allowed* to stay up late tonight.
- To do this activity, you have to ask three other students the questions. **MUST**
 To do this activity, you _____ three other students the questions.
- They didn't have to leave. **WERE**
 They _____ stay.
- You *mustn't* talk during the presentation. **ALLOWED**
 You _____ during the presentation.
- Were you allowed to go out on your own when you were younger? **HAVE**
 _____ go out with an adult when you were younger?

- 4 ●●● Complete the blog post with one word in each gap.

A TALE OF TWO SCHOOLS

My last school was very unusual because there were almost no rules. We were ¹ *allowed* to wear what we wanted (there was no uniform) and we did ² _____ have to do any homework. In fact, we didn't ³ _____ to go to class if we didn't want to! But we ⁴ _____ to respect each other and no fighting or bullying was allowed.

My new school is completely the opposite. We ⁵ _____ do all our homework and if we don't do it, we ⁶ _____ to do double homework as a punishment. We ⁷ _____ not allowed to wear anything we want - we have ⁸ _____ wear a school uniform. But they are thinking about changing this rule next year, so we won't have ⁹ _____ wear specific clothes. But we will still ¹⁰ _____ to dress in smart clothes - we won't ¹¹ _____ allowed to wear jeans and trainers, for example.