

be able to

- We usually use **can** to express ability in the present.
The baby can speak.
- We usually use **could** to express ability in the past.
I could climb trees when I was young.
- **Be able to** expresses ability and forms all tenses. It is mainly used in tenses where we cannot use *can*.
Jack will be able to play football on Saturday. He's feeling better.

Could expresses general ability in the past.

Was/were able to expresses ability in a particular situation in the past.

*I **could** draw well at the age of five.*

*I **was able to** draw well at the age of five.*

*The firefighters **were able to** put out the fire after two hours.*

The firefighters ~~could~~ put out the fire after two hours.

B. Rewrite the sentences using the correct form of *be able to*.

1. Two years ago, Jack couldn't speak a word of Spanish.

2. In a few years' time, the team will have the ability to take part in the championship.

3. I'm very upset and I can't talk to you right now.

4. While Sue was in London, she had the ability to do a business course.
