

## COULD / COULDN'T Past abilities

## Could and couldn't



We use **could** or **couldn't** + base form to talk about ability in the past. **Could** and **couldn't** are the past forms of **can** and **can't**.

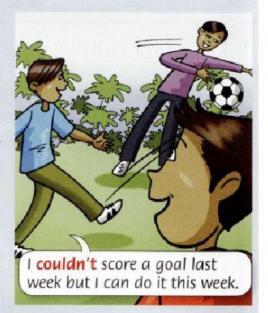
The children **could** speak two languages when they were five.

He couldn't see the board because he needed glasses.

We can use can to compare a situation or ability in the past with one now.

Max couldn't speak French when he was young, but he can now.

A few months ago, Irina couldn't swim. She can now. Oliver could swim very fast when he was little, but he can't now.



## Complete the dialogue using:

could

couldn't

can

Sue	And this i	s me when I was fo	ur.	
Mai	¹ Could	you swim when yo	u were four?	Po Co
Sue	No, I <sup>2</sup>	, but I <sup>3</sup>	now. And you?	
Mai	Yes, I <sup>4</sup>	I learnt to sw	im when I was two.	
Sue	5	you send emails wi	nen you were four?	
Mai	No, I <sup>6</sup>	But my broth	er showed me how	to send emails last year.
Sue	And how	many languages <sup>7</sup>	you speak v	when you were four?
Mai	Onlu one	. But now I <sup>8</sup>	speak two!	



## Look at the list. Complete the sentences with could or couldn't



Ten years ago	
drive a car	1
use a computer	X
speak Spanish	1
pitch a tent	X
run ten kilometres	X
light a fire	1
write computer programs	1
play the guitar	X
climb trees	1



1. Yasmin

drive a car.

2. Rob and I

use a computer.

3. Edward

speak Spanish.

4. Ted and Leo

pitch a tent.

5. Lewis

run ten kilometres

6. Kim and I

light a fire

7. Sidney

play the guitar

8. Seb

climb trees