

Can, Can't, Could, Couldn't

Use **can** or **can't** to talk about someone's **ability now** or **ability in the future**.

Example: Mary can't swim. (now)

Maybe next month, she can go back to school. (in a future month)

Use **could** or **couldn't** to talk about someone's **ability in the past**.

Example: I could fit in that dress when I was 20 years old. (at a past time)

He didn't have enough money and he couldn't go on vacation last year. (a past year)

Instructions: Use **can**, **can't**, **could**, or **couldn't** to finish these sentences.

Be careful with negative or positive sentences.

1. I have a bad headache today, and I _____ go to class.
2. My brother _____ cook very well. He studied to be a chef.
3. When she was only 5 years old, my friend Kerry _____ speak 3 languages.
4. I have to go away on business tonight, so I _____ come to your party on Saturday.
5. Kevin lived in Quebec when he was a child, so he _____ speak French quite well. He will help you with your French homework.
6. I have to buy a new cellphone. I _____ hear you very well.
7. When the car drove into the lake, Henry _____ open the door. Firefighters had to rescue him.
8. So many people came to my office yesterday. I _____ finish the work I was doing.
9. Mabel says that her uncle is a musician and that he _____ play the guitar like a professional.
10. Next year when this class ends, I hope I _____ speak English well.

To be able to / To not be able to

Use *am, is, are, was, were, or will be able to* for someone's *ability at any time* → *in the past, in the present or in the future.*

Example: Mary wasn't able to swim. (in the past)

Now she is able to swim, but her son isn't able to swim. (now)

When they move, their sons will be able to have separate rooms (in the future)

[NOTE: Adverbs like *never, sometimes, soon* come after the first verb or modal.]

Instructions: Use **to be able to** or **to not be able to** to finish these sentences.

***Do NOT use can, can't, could or couldn't.**

Be careful with negative or positive sentences and with adverbs.

- Adan and her mother were not able to open the door because it was locked.
- I _____ never _____ memorize all these grammar rules before the test next week.
- They _____ finish the football match before the storm started.
- Bill is so sick that he _____ run the race next week.
- I practiced for weeks, so I _____ swim much faster in yesterday's race.
- A: Did you buy any fresh fish in the store?
B: No, I _____ find good fish, but I _____ find some at the market tomorrow.
- My grandmother _____ soon _____ use a computer well because she's taking lessons at the library.
- I _____ open this window. I think it's stuck!
- Gillian _____ play the piano. She's never studied it.
- I looked everywhere for the money, and I _____ find it before the pizza arrived.