

4A

can, could, be able to (ability and possibility)

can / could

I can speak three languages fluently.

Jenny can't come tonight. She's sick.

My cousin could play the violin when she was three.

They couldn't wait because they were in a hurry.

Could you open the door for me, please?

- *can* is a modal verb. It only has a present form (which can be used with future meaning) and a past or conditional form (*could*).
- For all other tenses and forms, we use *be able to* + base form.

be able to + base form

1 Luke has been able to swim since he was three.

I'd like to be able to ski.

I love being able to stay in bed late on Sunday morning.

You'll be able to practice your English in the US.

2 Fortunately, I am able to accept your invitation.

My colleagues weren't able to come to yesterday's meeting.

(2 34))



1 We use *be able to* + base form for ability and possibility, especially where there is no form of *can*, e.g., future, present perfect, infinitive and gerund, etc.

2 We sometimes use *be able to* in the present and past (instead of *can / could*), usually if we want to be more formal.

a Complete with the correct form of *be able to* (⊕, □, or ⊖).

I've never been able to scuba dive.

1 Her cell phone has been turned off all morning, so I talk to her yet.

2 I don't like noisy restaurants. I like have a conversation without shouting.

3 I leave home when I get a job.

4 We're having a party next Saturday. you come?

5 You need swim before you can go in a canoe.

6 I'm going to France next week, but I don't speak French. I hate communicate with people.

7 Fortunately, firefighters rescue all of the people trapped inside the burning house.

8 I'm very sorry, but we go to your wedding next month. We'll be on vacation.

9 I'm feeling a little worse. you contact the doctor yet?

10 The manager see you right now because he's in a meeting.

b Circle the correct form. Check ✓ if both are possible.



I've always wanted to can / be able to perform.

1 My little boy couldn't / wasn't able to speak until he was almost two years old.

2 She's much better after her operation. She'll can / be able to walk again in a few months.

3 He hasn't could / been able to fix my bike yet. He'll do it tomorrow.

4 It's the weekend at last! I love can / being able to go out with my friends.

5 When we lived on the coast, we used to can / be able to go to the beach every day.

6 I can't / 'm not able to send any emails right now. My computer isn't working.

7 I could / was able to read before I started school.

8 We won't can / be able to go on vacation this year because we need to spend a lot of money on the house.

9 Linda hasn't been able to / couldn't find a job.

10 Alex can / is able to speak Korean fluently after living in Seoul for ten years.

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