



MODALS OF ABILITY

MODAL

USAGE

PRESENT

EXAMPLE

CAN

General or specific ability

CAN/CAN'T

Richard **can** speak French fluently.

BE ABLE TO

General or specific ability

AM/ARE/IS
(NOT) ABLE TO

Max **was able to** swim.



MODAL

USAGE

PAST

EXAMPLE

COULD

Could - general ability

COULD

My sister **could** swim when I was six.

Couldn't - general or specific

COULDN'T

I **couldn't** play the piano when she was five.

BE ABLE TO

General or specific ability

WAS/WERE
(NOT) ABLE TO

Jennifer **was not able to** dance when she was eight.

MANAGED TO

Specific ability

MANAGED TO

Police finally **managed to** catch the culprit.

MODAL

USAGE

FUTURE

EXAMPLE

CAN

General or specific ability

CAN/CAN'T

I **can** help you tomorrow.

BE ABLE TO

General ability.

WILL/WON'T BE
ABLE TO

Journalists **will be able to** preview the exhibition tomorrow.